

SAYINGS AND DOINGS.
A
SERIES
OF
SKETCHES FROM LIFE.

Full of *wise saws* and *modern instances*.

SHAKSPEARE

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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M E R T O N .

CONCLUDED.

CHAPTER X.

“ Come, be a man—Drown thyself? Drown cats and blind puppies! I have professed me thy friend, and I confess me knit to thy deserving with cables of perdurable toughness : I could never better stead thee than now : put money in thy purse.”——

THIS last adventure affected Henry but little when it first occurred, for though under his present circumstances a certain store of ready-money was very agreeable, he had now become so accustomed to the ruggedness of the road through life, that he stepped over minor ills as the traveller, anxious to reach the summit of the mountain, skips over the little hillocks he encounters in his path, or, if he be wise and

skilful, renders them rather of use in his task of climbing.

The trial was at hand, the result of which was to him the summit of the mountain; and while in pursuit of his great object, (a final disentanglement from his unfortunate marriage,) he would not have been likely to care a great deal for his six hundred and two pounds eighteen shillings and sixpence, which in all probability he should eventually recover, had not the gentleman we have already mentioned, (Mr. Templeman the solicitor,) mildly illustrated the proverb which says, that "Necessity has no law," by reminding Henry of the increasing expenses of his case, and the absolute want of means for carrying it on, which (however great his respect for his client,) he could not at the moment himself conveniently furnish. This little refreshener coming just at the same time as the bankruptcy of Messrs. Saddington, Wynch, and Colville, made Henry feel the importance and inconvenience of his loss, which otherwise he would have regarded as a trifle, and moreover reduced him to the necessity of looking out for some mode of raising the money required for his lawyers.

His salary from Government, it appeared, upon a side-winded enquiry, which he made at the Colonial Office, did not begin till his arrival at the place of his destination—a circumstance which, while it spoke very favourably for the economy of the administration, considerably lowered the value of the appointment in his eye, inasmuch as he was quite certain that Mrs. Meadows would never acquiesce in her daughter's banishment to an island, whose existence was doubtful, and where, if an establishment were actually formed, the “flame they were so rich in,” would hardly serve to keep her and her husband warm through a five months' night.

This little drawback he resolved to maintain profoundly secret in his own breast; hoping when it came to the point, either to make an arrangement with some desperate man labouring under a wife and ten children, who might be glad to exchange some six or seven hundred pounds *per annum* here, for a quadrupled income nearer the Pole, or at all events induce Fanny's mother to relinquish her opposition to a match, which, according to the proverb, seemed to have been “made in Heaven.”

Henry in this dilemma had recourse to what appears a very silly scheme for an intelligent young man to adopt: it was no other than that of answering an advertisement put forth through some morning newspaper, by one A. B. who professed the greatest readiness to assist heirs, public officers, and persons of respectability of all sorts, with money, on the shortest notice and the most equitable terms. He met with immediate encouragement from the mysterious personage, who lay *perdu* somewhere in the neighbourhood of the New Road, and having in due time visited him, and been very civilly received, proposed to borrow a thousand pounds upon that, which every borrower is extremely ready to offer, but which few lenders are inclined to accept—his own personal security.

There appeared, as might be supposed, a good deal of difficulty in the outset of the negotiation, but after two or three days' delay, sundry visits and letters, references, and applications, the agent's friend, who was to be the lender, who lived out of town, and who moreover appeared to calculate more upon the damages to be recovered by Henry from Laving-

ton, than any other security, made an arrangement which seemed extremely fair to the borrower, and was immediately entered into.

The lender was a general merchant, who had not the money, but the *money's-worth* at command; and accordingly, Henry, upon the suggestion and at the recommendation of A. B. eventually received, after deducting thirty pounds for a *douceur* to the said A. B. and fifty pounds for a year's interest, thirty-five dozen of Champaigne, at six pounds *per* dozen; fifteen tons of outshot hemp, at thirty-eight pounds *per* ton; twenty pounds' worth of Purbeck paving stones; and a ton-and-a-half of Derby cheese, at sixty-five shillings *per cwt.*; into possession of which, together with twenty-two pounds ten shillings *in cash*, my hero was forthwith put, in return for a bond judgment, and warrant of attorney for one thousand pounds.

This being arranged, the exemplary A. B. kindly enquired whether he should undertake (which he would do for a very trifling commission) to dispose of these articles on account of my hero: a proposition so extremely civil and obliging that it did not require a

moment's consideration on Henry's part to be accepted. Time was of course necessary to throw them judiciously into the market, which Henry could not afford to give, and they were accordingly sold by the great exertions and good management of the kind mediator, for nearly four hundred pounds, which was thought by Henry a very favourable return, considering that he had discovered, soon after the arrangement, that the Champaigne was ropy, the hemp not answerable to sample, that the Purbeck stones were lost by the sinking of a barge in a squally night near Limehouse, and that the cheese, instead of Derby, which it professed to be, was small Edam, (foreign.)

Still, however, the money was obtained, the works were oiled, and the great machinery of the law was put in motion; every hour, as the day of trial approached, brought fresh certainty of the result, and the ten thousand pounds, at which the damages were laid, might be fairly considered in Henry's pocket.

In the mean time, Mrs. Meadows's benevolence with respect to her new *protégée*, Miss Graham, by no means slumbered, and her efforts on her behalf were repaid, much to her

surprise, by a cheque for one thousand pounds, which was enclosed to her for Mary's use, at the desire of Old Felton, who was extremely ill, and unable himself to write more than his name. The affair had therefore been managed between his attorney and his housekeeper, Mrs. Gage, who was *in Mary's secret*, but who did not tell the *whole story*, either to her superannuated master or to the lawyer, but confided to both of them just enough to corroborate the statement of Mrs. Meadows's friend, and prove the obligation which the Felton family were under, to do something for the young woman, without making any explanation likely to weaken an affection, which the said lawyer, who had lately succeeded his father in business at Haversfield, had in early days felt for the said Mary.

Old Felton had few relations, and those but distant ones; the Castletons were, perhaps, amongst the nearest of his connexions, and with them he kept up no communication himself. George, the young man my readers may recollect as being the companion of John Felton, on the shooting-party at Carlton, had married in such a way as to disoblige the old gentleman so seriously, that he had quite discarded

him. Thus, considering the state of his health and his intellect, and the influence under which he evidently was at this period, it did not appear at all improbable, that Mary Graham, by the misrepresentations of the interested party (who had the making of Felton's will, and who would have been enraptured under such circumstances to marry her,) might, in an almost miraculous manner, become possessed of more of the old man's property than she ever expected, or than indeed would ever have fallen to her share, had her seducer survived.

The good fortune of some persons and the perverse fate of others, are, I admit, the subjects of my present consideration; and I cannot but pause for a moment to remark, how different the positions in which the various characters of my drama stand at the present moment, are from those in which we found them at its commencement. How long the sunshine of one set of persons and the gloom of the other are to last, time will shew: most certainly Henry's present situation was capable of much amendment. No wonder, then, that his hopes and expectations were called into full play by the one *certainty*, that in a few days the im-

portant cause of Merton v. Lavington would be called on and decided.

There was a little drawback (as indeed there generally was to all his anticipated successes in life) upon the present occasion, which presented itself in the shape of a piece of intelligence from Mrs. Meadows, of her intention to go with her daughter to Paris immediately. Mr. Wilson, so long the admirer of Miss Neville, (Fanny's friend,) had at length been accepted by that lady, with the consent of her father and connexions, and Fanny was solicited to accept the office of bride's-maid upon the occasion of her approaching marriage.

It was almost impossible to refuse; and since Wilson had resolved on taking his bride from the church-door to France, to introduce her to his aunt, who was living in the French metropolis, Mrs. Meadows all at once discovered that it would be the most admirable opportunity for her to pay a visit to the ancient friends of her youth, the *ci-devant* button-makers of Harley Street, whose family had been living either in Paris or its neighbourhood ever since the death of the old gentleman who was the head of it—an act of gratitude and respect,

upon which she dilated with her accustomed animation and enthusiasm.

I am a great admirer of sincerity, and I worship gratitude, wherever it displays itself; but I cannot, 'even with *my* charitable disposition towards my friends, shut my eyes and open my ears so implicitly and civilly, as to blind myself to facts, and listen to pretences at their will and pleasure. I give Mrs. Meadows credit for a great deal of good feeling, mixed with a tolerable share of worldliness, a little cant, a sufficient quantity of vanity, and the usual proportion of maternal affection, and I perceived the moment this proposed excursion to the Continent was communicated to me, something in it, more than "met the ear,"—that is to say, as I listened—I looked; as I heard—I saw; and in the twinkling of an eye discovered that, although affection to old friends, gratitude to old connexions, and the sweet tribute payable to "Auld Lang Syne," were the ostensible causes of the movement, something more had occurred, than my smart friend with the rouge and ringlets chose to develope, to occasion the sudden alteration in their plans.

The real truth was, that the wary Mrs.

Meadows had been picking up *renseignements* of Henry's affairs from various quarters. She began to doubt, in some degree, the value of his appointment; she had heard of the necessity of residence on the spot; and she had moreover collected—certainly not from his friends—doubts as to the result of the trial; putting all of which together, she resolved, that an expedition to France would, while it gave her a character for amiability and tenderness of feeling, afford her time for the consideration of her future conduct towards her *soi-disant* son-in-law, who fluctuated in her estimation, like a Columbian Bond in the Foreign Stock-Market, her affections towards him being regulated by his circumstances, as implicitly as the tides are influenced by the pale orb of night.

Fanny, much as she esteemed Lucy Neville, felt a little distaste for the protracted sojourn in France; but her mother won her over to *her* way of considering the matter, by pointing out the indelicacy there would be, in a marriage with Merton, immediately after the decision of the Court, with respect to his present wife; not to speak of the law's delay, which would militate seriously against the final termination of

the case, so as to render the plaintiff marriageable again, which in all probability he would not legally be, for many months to come.

“Marry in haste, and repent at leisure,” is a proverb in pretty general use; but seriously speaking, however easy it may be to get a wife in England, the difficulty of getting rid of one is by no means trifling. Divorce is one of the blest privileges of aristocracy, and Mrs. Meadows foresaw rubs and impediments, of the nature of which she was quite aware, but which she certainly did not succeed in making Fanny perfectly well understand.

The Nevilles were delighted with the scheme of making up the party; and when Fanny, either in single-hearted good-nature, or in hopes of getting out of it altogether, started her favourite *protégée*, Mary Graham, as an objection to the plan, she was over-ruled in a moment. Her mother argued, that interested as they might be, from circumstances, in the fate of that young person, still, neither her claim upon them, nor her condition of life, could sanction them in making her one of such an expedition, nor justify *her* in expecting such a mark of attention. Mrs. Neville, however, found a

remedy far beyond Mary's hopes, or Fanny's fears. She proposed to take Miss Graham with her to Brighton, where she and her husband were going, after the wedding, to give the two younger girls the benefit of the sea air.

This *was* an offer: Mary had won upon Mrs. Neville by her delicate manners, her personal attractions, her unassuming accomplishments, and the interesting detail of her sorrows. The moment had now arrived for Mary to decide whether she should still keep on the mask, or avow her real circumstances. The question was a most important one: she would be made by silence, and marred by candour. The poor girl, though she looked divinely, was in fact, but human—her secret was known only to one individual on earth; that individual loved and pitied, and would never betray her. She was therefore safe, if she kept her own counsel; and it would have been an act of self-devotion and *novel* heroism in her, far beyond the imperfect ability of a poor finite creature, to have avowed her guilt, to those who loved her for her misfortunes, and would have discarded her for her crime!

If, as the satirists say, it is a wonder that

a woman keeps a secret, the wonder perhaps ceases when the secret happens to be her own. Certain it is, that Mary Graham conducted herself *wonderfully* upon the present occasion, and never dropped the remotest hint towards the real state of the case. She was received into the family of the Nevilles, not exactly as governess to the younger girls, but as their temporary companion and associate during the absence of their newly married sister, who was expected to return from her continental visit in about four months, and in that general and undefined capacity for which *she appeared* so admirably qualified, was speedily domesticated in their house.

Some of my readers will think, that Mary should have assumed a different tone, have taken higher ground, and have starved, rather than thus practise a tacit imposition upon so respectable a family as the Nevilles; and if I had been inventing adventures instead of detailing facts, or working out morals instead of illustrating proverbs, it would have been right, no doubt, to have made her fling herself at Mrs. Neville's feet, her beautiful brown hair all dishevelled, her expressive dark blue eyes

filled with tears, and in a strain of heart-broken despair, confess her "single error," then probably rush from her patroness's presence, either into a wilderness, or to immediate death. But nature, self-preserving nature, from which alone I sketch, prompted my little villager to a very different line of conduct. She had loved, and had been deceived—she had been miserable enough, Heaven knows! Long-suffering and repentance had fortified her mind, and reason and religion had taught her to regard the world with complacent satisfaction, and resolve to live in it, an amended life, and thus atone for her past error by the most exemplary conduct.

With all these good resolutions, and the extremely pleasant offer of Mrs. Neville to boot, (in which her children eagerly joined,) Mary determined to settle herself comfortably when she could;—a decision which does not seem very extraordinary, and which gave all parties concerned, the most heartfelt pleasure.

Amongst those who heard of it, no one was more truly gratified than poor Mrs. Gage, who, in her affectionate letters to Mary, mentioned that the old 'squire repeatedly spoke of her with

tears in his eyes, and she was sure if it had been pressed upon him, would have had her down to Haversfield—a measure which the said Mrs. Gage, for reasons best known to herself, and which* any of us may guess, did not think it safe or judicious to enforce at the moment.

All this, then, being arranged, Henry, as I have already said, was informed of the great movement of the Meadowses, and it came upon him the more heavily as it was quite unexpected. There was a solace, a comfort in the society of the mother and her daughter, which cheered him even in his saddest hours. Their house was the haven where he anchored safely, after the most tempestuous days; and that they should remove themselves to such a distance just as his calamities were coming to a close, and his difficulties drawing to a conclusion, appeared a sort of renewal of ill-luck, for which he was not prepared, and he bore it with less philosophy than he usually had at command. Wounds and thrusts, and blows and buffetings from indifferent people in the world, he could endure, but a stab inflicted by Fanny's hand was sharp indeed; for, as he said, he was quite sure if *she* had really resisted the proposition,

it would not have been enforced. It was in vain she represented the actual state of the case, as she was taught to believe it: he was dissatisfied; and if he had not known that Major Ryshbrook was actually at an English watering-place, he would assuredly have been (as a well-regulated lover ought never to be) in a passion.

A most extraordinary *penchant* (lovers will think it natural) seized him in the midst of his irritation, which was no other than an inveterate desire to see France. But there were many circumstances which militated against his joining the party destined for that country, some of which were insuperable, which, by the way, the lady mother of my Fanny knew perfectly well at the time she made the arrangement; and poor Henry was doomed to hear bells ring, which jingled not for him, eat bride-cake *he* had not ordered, and stand upon the steps of Mrs. Neville's door to see Fanny and happiness once more roll away from him in Wilson's travelling-carriage and four, in which the party started for Dover immediately after the wedding breakfast.

It was all too true, and yet so sudden, that it seemed like a dream; and till the servant

asked him if he would not walk in, he stood at the door gazing, transfixed like a statue. The dulness of the rest of the day was so insufferable, that he almost lamented the absence of a serious misfortune, which generally occurred to him at the rate of one *per diem*, and which might have given something like an interest to his existence.

To be sure, in a little space of time he would be engaged in his trial—there would be excitement and agitation enough to satisfy any man disliking still life, and he endeavoured to busy himself in the preparations, which were, in fact, already made.

Henry, although convinced of his success, had left no precaution untaken to ensure it; and early on the eventful morning he repaired to the neighbourhood of Westminster Hall, and breakfasted with his amiable and exemplary solicitor; who, however, although he ate very heartily, did not appear quite so elated with the prospect before him as his sanguine client.

Henry had not nerve, nor did he think it would be delicate, to go into the court openly and avowedly, but as soon as he had gathered that the case was actually on, he stole anxiously thither, and concealing himself partly behind a

curtain and a column in a dark corner, his eager ears received with rapture the convincing oratory of his leading counsel, who, with surprising energy and a flow of eloquence perfectly astounding, depicted, in language which it would only injure to repeat, "the bright flame of Hymen burning like the lamp in the pure fane of Vesta, blurred and sullied as it lay upon the sanctified altar by the sacrilegious hand of the defendant, who came hurrying from France like the spoiler of old, and hastening to Curzon-street, May Fair, like the deadly serpent tempting the confiding woman to her ruin."

In short, the metaphors were so frequent, the imagery so brilliant, and the language so redundant, that although, owing to the proverbial haste of his countrymen, (for he was an Irish gentleman,) the learned counsel, in a similar style to that which I have quoted, likened "the insidious defendant," whose guilty tears he sneered at, "to a politic crocodile coming in a travelling carriage to snatch away his blooming prey," and charged him with carrying off the lady, leaning on his arm like a wily fox as he was, from "an assembly;"—still it dazzled, it won, it excited, it agitated the whole court. The jury trembled, the foreman's hair actually

uncurled itself, and the learned Chief Justice blew his nose twice at its conclusion. The thing was settled; and Henry was so convinced of the result, that he imagined no man would be bold enough or silly enough to attempt any thing like a reply.

But, alas! up rose a steady, grave, and sedate-looking person, who, after the learned counsel for the plaintiff had called his witnesses and proved the adultery to the entire satisfaction of every indifferent person, and, to the heartfelt mortification of poor Henry, who was most anxious for such proof, and yet almost wept at his own success, began so to cross-examine, torture, turn and twist their evidence, that my hero retired to his coffee-house in double-quick time, and in an agony of doubt and amazement. Here he meant to have remained, and waited till the great end was achieved, but it was a situation too trying, too agitating: he again returned to his snug corner in the court, and again listened. The first words which caught his ear sounded something like these,—they came from the Bench—

“What! do you mean to tell the Court that the plaintiff left his wife two days after their marriage, to visit another woman?”

The answer was quite inaudible.

“Can that be the case?” said the learned Judge again, somewhat sharply.

Here a murmuring ensued, the purport of which, from the distance at which he was placed, and the noise of his neighbours who did not care one straw about the result of the case then trying, Henry could not perfectly understand; but he heard the grave-looking person, who was of counsel for the defendant, conclude something he had been saying with this animated appeal:—

“It is all true, my Lord; and now, my Lord, this man, this Merton, this debased, degraded plaintiff, has the effrontery to come here and ask for damages!”

Henry could just see the face of the judge over the backs of the barristers’ wigs, and never were surprise, indignation, contempt, and ridicule, more splendidly illustrated than in the countenance of his Lordship after this agreeable, yet somewhat forcible observation.

What added to Henry’s misery was, that a judge who is ordinarily and proverbially a grave personage, should, after hearing this, actually smile and nod at his learned brother Serjeant Honeydew, expressing by his looks and ges-

tures, that he had never heard any thing so impudent or so absurd in the whole course of his practice, as an attempt to get compensation for such a loss.

When his Lordship began to sum up, and made two or three extremely unpleasing allusions to the plaintiff's deception and desertion of his wife, Henry was first angry and then miserable; but when, in reference to his notes of the examination, his Lordship descanted upon the plurality of Mrs. Merton's infidelities, and inveighed bitterly against the meanness of the plaintiff, who had evidently married her for the sake of her fortune, and the advantage likely to arise from the influence of Lord Castleton, he was paralyzed. He, who would not have suffered the slightest imputation to be cast upon his character without instantly resenting it, doomed to listen to a description of himself absolutely revolting—it was too much; and he rushed from the fane of justice to his old retreat at the tavern, where his solicitor at four o'clock joined him; and, with a face considerably lengthened from fatigue and disappointment, informed him that the jury upon the ground of his neglect and deception to-

wards his new married wife, her notorious misconduct before, and an apparent collusion on his part in her intrigues after, marriage, had returned a VERDICT FOR THE DEFENDANT !

I think little remains to be said to impress upon my readers the effect this intelligence had upon Henry :—duped, deceived, and imposed upon by the girl, for duping, deceiving, and imposing upon whom, he was saddled with her for life ; liable to her debts ; open to the ridicule, if not the absolute contempt, of the world ; stigmatized in a public court as the willing vendor of his own reputation in the first instance, and the easy barterer of that of his wife in the second ; loaded with all the costs of the suit in question by way of immediate ill, and eternally shut out of the possibility of marrying Fanny Meadows !

He turned in his distress to his three counsel, and never was more surprised in his life at finding them in the most admirable spirits. His horror, however, when he, who (like all of us at various times) fancied at that moment the eyes of the whole world were on him, and everybody more or less interested in the impor-

tant cause just then concluded—beheld the grave-looking gentleman who had cut up his evidence, ridiculed his advocate, and clearly displayed, that his learned friend was totally ignorant of his subject, step into the same carriage with his opponent, and invite the second of his counsel to take an early dinner with him before a consultation at the chambers of a third in Lincoln's Inn that evening. Dinner! thought Henry, sickening at the word; and can these heartless men think of dining after my defeat!

One of his lawyers, however, *did* offer something like consolation, and Henry listened to him with implicit attention, and a certain degree of gratitude. He was the junior, and having nothing whatever to do, speculated upon being invited to dine with his client: he, however, failed in this attempt, for, when by way of soothing my poor hero he talked to him of lodging an appeal in the Arches, of going over the matter again, of appealing to the delegates, of a probability that he might get a verdict in his favour; and then by allowing his wife a handsome maintenance, secure himself from her society, while he applied to Parliament for a

divorce, and eventually, in five or six years, at a certain expense, probably rid himself of her altogether. This jargon, which was quite unintelligible to Henry, brought on something like a paroxysm of raving madness: he was perfectly bewildered; and had not the kindness and attention of his solicitor induced him to force him into the acceptance of an invitation to *his* house, I am inclined to believe that my narrative would have been cut short here, by the self-destruction of my poor hero.

He was, however, doomed to afford *more sport*; and as I cannot extricate him satisfactorily from his present difficulties, I will for the present leave him to his fate, promising, at all events, "*to run him again to-morrow.*"

CHAPTER XI.

“ Put out the light, and then ——.”

WHEN, after a torturing night of sleepless recollections, poor Merton arose from his bed, it seemed as if he were in a wilderness; those from whom alone he could receive consolation were far away, and the flippant attentions of common-place acquaintances would but ill atone for that soothing interest which real friendship only feels and only can impart.

Anxious of course to see the account of the trial, in which he had figured the day before, as plaintiff, he seated himself at the breakfast-table, and proceeded to read the detail of his own deception and his wife's infidelities, till he

began to fancy himself a perfect monster of deformity. The eloquent speech, which he had not sufficient courage to hear, displaying all the affair of Southampton and Liverpool, the narrative of Mrs. Merton's feelings, the agony she endured from the deception practised upon her, in short every thing which could harrow up the feelings of a jury against him, in the pleading, and which would not fail to have the same effect upon the public now that it was printed, came like basilisks to his eyes, and he threw down the paper in a fit of wretchedness not at all decreased, by finding in another journal a long and important paragraph, written in a high tone of morality, in which the writer deduced, from an exposure of the enormities of the young and profligate couple, the most useful lessons to the rising generation.

While mechanically going through the motions of breakfast-eating, he again took up the same newspaper, and turning to the reports of parliamentary debates, perceived to his surprise and (strange to say) gratification, that one of the members of the Opposition, very notorious for his strict and rigid examination into the proceedings of Government, had given no-

tice of a motion for the next Tuesday, on the subject of the "Civil Establishment at Melville Island."

With a brevity most remarkable as well as satisfactory, this exemplary gentleman had upon the present occasion confined himself to a general satire upon the profligacy of administration, stating that he delayed coming to particulars, till he should be better informed upon the subject, which he seriously expected to be, in the early part of the ensuing week, when he promised the honourable gentlemen opposite, that he would bring forward his motion. He wished, however, to satisfy himself in the present stage of the business, upon one point, by asking an honourable member, whom he saw in his place, whether there actually *was* such an island as "Melville Island;" and if it existed, in what degrees of latitude and longitude it was to be found? To which that honourable gentleman in reply (as it becomes every member of a government to do) professed his incompetency to answer two questions of such importance, in the absence of an honourable friend of his, who would doubtless be able to give the most satisfactory information upon the subject, which, indeed, properly

belonged to his department. Here the conversation dropped, and the motion was, as I have already said, fixed for the following Tuesday.

Henry felt that this little stir-up looked like business, and might hasten the organization of the proposed colony. He anticipated the animated *exposé* of the intended establishment, the detail of advantages derivable from the extension of our colonial power, and in short a brilliant defence from the under-secretary, of that salutary and judicious measure, by the adoption of which, the national interests were to be advanced, and he (Mt. Merton) was to secure the sum of two thousand four hundred pounds sterling *per annum*.

Scarcely had he arranged his thoughts upon this, to him, important subject, and settled in his mind where he could buy the most powerful stoves and the warmest blankets for his polar residence, and determined who should furnish the plate and glass for his establishment, when the waiter entered the room and delivered a letter to him, from Lord Castleton. Somewhat surprised at a communication from his lordship, at this particular juncture, Henry opened the envelope, and read as follows :

(“ Private and Confidential.”)

“ DEAR SIR, Grosvenor Square, July —.

Having late last night had some conversation with the friend, from whom I procured your nomination to the office of Colonial Secretary in Melville Island, I think it but right to let you know, before I leave town (which I do this morning) that Government have abandoned the intention (at all events for the present) of forming any civil establishment in that part of the world. I am sorry that my wishes to serve you have been thus unexpectedly frustrated.

I am, dear Sir,

Your's faithfully,

“ Henry Merton, Esq.
&c. &c.”

“ CASTLETON.”

This was the *coup de grace*! The existence of his wife certainly made the term of his separation from Fanny indefinite, but this last blow annihilated the connexion altogether: on the one hand there was a balance due to his lawyers, a debt of a thousand pounds to the money-lender;—on the other, some two hundred pounds *per annum*, of which he had taken pos-

session, arising from the property of his late father. There was Fanny in France, Lord Castleton just started for the country, and Kate doubtless in high health and spirits enjoying the ill success of her defeated husband in the arms of his too successful rival : it was really overwhelming.

In considering the immediate reasons for Lord Castleton's letter, poor Henry, applying every thing to *self*, by no chance hit upon the right one. He attributed it to his Lordship's contempt for his character as developed in the account of the trial in that day's paper, and fancied himself extremely cunning in making out, that his noble correspondent had referred to the "night before," as wishing to remove his suspicions from the real cause of the abandonment of him to his fate, which my poor hero clearly saw in the communication before him. But he was not quite enough of a politician to discover the real secret with all his puzzling. The menaced motion of the honourable member for Boreham was the true cause of the sudden information which he had received. It was not worth while to incur any responsibility for the sake of the few individuals who had

been nominated to offices in the proposed colony ; and, therefore, rather than fight a battle, defend a favourite measure, or irritate the Opposition, his friends in Downing-street had agreed to throw Melville Island overboard, with all its appending offices and situations, without the slightest reference to Henry's personal qualities or character, with which they troubled themselves just as little in his dismissal, as they had in his appointment.

Henry, however, was nearer the mark in thinking that the trial really had something to do with the notice of the affair in the House of Commons ; for his situation in the new colony having been accidentally alluded to, in the course of the examinations while a certain parliamentary barrister happened to be in court, he mentioned the circumstance by way of information to his honourable friend the member for Boreham, who, not being particular as to the sources of his intelligence, the mode of obtaining it, or its authenticity when obtained, immediately put it into shape, and founded upon it that motion, the mere mention of which caused such consternation, and which in its turn caused the destruction of all Henry's hopes

and anticipations—But what, to the honourable and exemplary member for Boreham, were these?—what was any thing, compared with his public duty?

“ Learn hence, ye Romans, on how sure a base
The PATRIOT builds his happiness ;—no stroke,
No keenest, deadliest, shaft of adverse fate
Can make his generous bosom quite despair,
But that alone by which his country falls ;
Grief may to grief in endless round succeed,
And Nature suffer when our children bleed ;
Yet still superior must that hero prove,
Whose first, best passion is his COUNTRY’S LOVE.”

“ Mighty fine,” thought poor Henry, as he recollected these lines, and thought at the same moment of his own hopeless situation ; “ but nevertheless I am completely ruined.” He inquired if a servant was waiting for an answer to Lord Castleton’s letter : he was told that there was not. He was now mightily puzzled how to act ; his evils always came upon him in clusters : if this had only occurred a day or two before the trial, he would have had no difficulty whatever in going to Lord Castleton, and impressing upon his mind the perilous state of his circumstances, and

the necessity of his assistance ; but so immediately after the publication of the CRIM. CON. case in which he cut so bad a figure, how could he see, or even address the guardian of his late—of his present wife ? He was quite distracted ; but when he calculated upon the emergency of the case, and reflected that if he allowed his Lordship to cool upon the matter, or if he himself appeared to acquiesce in what he conceived to be his Lordship's serious condemnation of his conduct, he should tacitly admit the justice of the change of feeling he but too clearly perceived in his Lordship's communication, he saw and felt the absolute necessity of immediately taking some strong and decided measure in his own behalf.

Moved to action by these considerations, he determined to make one great effort to conquer his scruples upon the occasion, and immediately follow Lord Castleton to whatever place he might be gone ; and in terms, which he considered must be irresistible, state the real situation in which he found himself. For, be it observed, although he had been from day to day deluded by the hope of discovering a will of his father's, no such document had yet appeared, which led him more than

ever to fear, that the obliterated paper, the remnants of which he had discovered amongst the ruins of the cottage, was actually the desired testament. In the absence of any such instrument he took possession (unresisted) of the little freehold, upon which the cottage *had* once stood, and from which alone he derived his present scanty income, assuredly not enough to have furnished a fashionable beau with shoestrings.

What added to his dissatisfaction upon this point, was the certainty in his own mind, that his father's resources had been ten times as great as his own were at present. The style and manner in which he had been brought up, and in which the old gentleman lived, bespoke, if not affluence, at least a competence to every thing enviable and respectable; but as we have seen, the ill-luck, which characterized the whole of Henry's career, extended itself even to the mystery in which he found himself involved at his father's death, with regard to his own circumstances.

It will be recollected, that the old gentleman, on the day of his decease, alluded to the fact of his having brought up his son without a profession, as a proof of his intentions and ability

to make him entirely independent; nay, ever since Henry had been of age, he had allowed him an income of more than treble the amount of all he now received from the whole of his paternal property. Mr. Merton's lawyer (with whom, indeed, he had seldom much business,) had never heard him drop the smallest observation relative to his resources; and although immediately after the old gentleman's death, and while Henry was in London, a stranger, apparently a professional man, had sought out my hero, and had a conversation with him on the subject of his parent's sudden dissolution, (stating himself to have been an intimate friend of his,) and although he had promised again to see Henry, still, neither did *he* come, nor could Henry ever trace him, by any means, so as to renew the acquaintance made in the hour of grief, and resume the conversation in which he had but inattentively joined, at the moment of his deepest sorrow.

Some time after the demise of old Mr. Merton, Henry had, by the advice of his professional friend, offered a reward in the newspapers for the will of his father, but no answer had been received to the advertisement; and Henry felt that the time was not far distant,

when his twenty or thirty paternal acres, which he had let for a term, and on which an opulent tailor was building himself a *cottage-ornée*, must be sold, to pay off his debt to the money-lender; and when, after a life of ease and comparative affluence, he would be thrown upon the wide world, without profession, trade, calling, or experience; and still worse, without any of those available talents which, like feline tenacity, always bring their possessors upon their legs, after a tumble.

Seeing, therefore, that his "financial horizon" was extremely clouded, and that all false delicacy must be exploded in the hope of clearing it, he proceeded immediately after breakfast to ascertain the place of Lord Castleton's destination. The porter at his Lordship's house, in Grosvenor-square, appeared to have taken his tone from his superiors, and evinced in the brief answer which he gave to the enquiry, a most wonderful change of manner, from that, which he had been accustomed to adopt towards Merton in other times. His having the newspaper of the day in his right hand, while he opened the portal with his left, did not at all diminish the mingled anger and vexation Henry felt at the impertinent reception given him by

the pampered menial ; and having received the information that “ my Lord was gone to Yarmouth,” he turned from the door, with a pang in his heart, and a wish on his lip, that he never had entered it.

Henry, who was at times prudent even in his rashness, thought it a necessary step now, to discharge his only remaining servant. The time had already arrived, when appearances ought to be objects of secondary importance with him, and seeing that a gentle descent, as the aëronauts will tell us, is less prejudicial than a rapid precipitation, he thought no opportunity could be more favourable for opening the valve, and letting himself down easy, by dispensing with the attendance of his “ man,” than that which now offered itself, in his departure for the country. It was certainly a sacrifice, and he felt it one ; but he felt also conscious, that he ought to make it, and accordingly, at four o’clock, Mr. Lambert,—his own particular Mr. Lambert,—had his audience of leave, and resigned into his master’s hands, the keys of office.

Here, then, for the first time poor Merton was *literally* alone, and thus solitarily did he proceed to an inn in the City, with his port-

manteau in a hackney-coach, and embark himself and the greater part of his personal property in the Yarmouth mail, not very ill satisfied that business afforded him so good an excuse for changing the scene and objects around him.

To describe the sick gentleman who had been taking ether, and the portly lady who had fortified her weak stomach with the spirit of peppermint, who were packed opposite to my hero in the coach—a pair, the one gigantic, the other diminutive—the one mild and ill,* the other in rude health—alike, indeed, in nothing, but in a determination to have neither of the glasses down—(it being July),—would not add to the amusement of my readers; but just merely to mention that from Romford to Chelmsford, and thence nearly to Colchester, a volatile gentleman at Henry's side did nothing but detail the proceedings upon the trial of *Merton v. Lavington*; descant upon the depravity of the lady, the duplicity of the husband, find motives for the plaintiff's conduct which had never actuated him, and add circumstances innumerable to the history which never had occurred; may give my friends a proper idea

of my poor hero's luck, and of the infinite pleasure derivable to a person at the moment held up to public notice, thus travelling in a public conveyance.

Tired and jaded, Henry at length (for every thing must have an end) beheld the crooked spire of old Yarmouth, crossed its drawbridge, and found himself deposited at the Wrestlers inn, more celebrated for the *jeu d'esprit* of the immortal Nelson than any thing else, who, when the landlord requested permission to call it Nelson's Hotel, and place his Lordship's arms over the door, gave him full permission to do the former, suggesting at the same time the omission of the latter ceremony, on the ground that he had *no arms to spare*.

No sooner arrived, (for Henry did not calculate that Lord Castleton might have chosen to divide his journey of one hundred and twenty miles, and sleep on the road,) than the anxious young man began making earnest enquiries for the nobleman, an interview with whom was so desirable to him; and upon finding that no such person was actually at the Wrestlers, or even expected at that inn, pursued his search at the Bear, and every other place, the inhabitants of which, were likely to have received information

of his Lordship's intended visit. Returning unsuccessfully to his old resting-place, he enlarged so much upon the coming of the statesman, that the landlord thought it only respectful to inform the Mayor. The Mayor thought it correct to assemble the corporation, the bell-ringers were forthwith put into requisition, a freedom was beautifully engrossed, a box was ordered to be put in hand wherein to enclose it, notice was sent to the commandant at the fort, who thought it but civil to communicate the fact to the senior naval officer; moreover, the Excise department dressed themselves in their gayest attire, the clerks at the Custom House put on their Sunday coats, and still better, the prettiest girls their prettiest faces, to welcome the distinguished guest;—in short, the whole town of Yarmouth was on the tiptoe of expectation.

Evening came, but no Lord Castleton; the morning of the next day dawned—the sun rose, but no Lord Castleton beamed upon the anxious eyes of the inhabitants; and when the day was somewhat advanced, Henry, who still remained at the inn, observed that the waiters more frequently than before, visited the room where he was sitting, to review the spoons and salt-cellar which were on a sideboard in the

apartment, evincing by this new caution a suspicion that he was one of a set of London thieves, who had freely and impertinently made use of the nobleman's name for some sinister purpose.

The sulkiness which the people about the place at first evinced, was, during the forenoon, converted into a sneering sort of ridicule, and Henry found himself so extremely uncomfortable, and, moreover, so very much ashamed of having apparently bragged of an acquaintance with his noble friend, that he determined to absent himself from the town in which he had unwillingly created such a sensation, and remain at some place in the neighbourhood during the day, till his Lordship really *did* arrive to clear him from the imputation under which he evidently was labouring, of being a propagator of false reports with a hope, as the recipient party evidently thought, of obtaining credit under false pretences.

In pursuance of this scheme, my poor ill-starred hero commenced a pedestrian excursion, which he intended should occupy the summer's day before him; and strolling along the road towards Lowestoffe, he was overtaken by a

chaise, returning to that place. Somewhat fatigued, rather hungry, extremely thirsty, and quite determined not to go back to Yarmouth till the shades of evening might hide him from the observation of the people, if Lord Castleton had not arrived, and which would be an admirable time to present himself to his Lordship if he had, Henry, laying aside those scruples, which men in civilized society feel, in doing that which is convenient, for fear it should not be "correct," gave an assenting nod to the uplifted whip of the postboy, and throwing himself very comfortably into the corner of his chaise, was thus conveyed to the principal inn at Lowestoffe, to which the said chaise belonged.

On his arrival there, he found the house thronged with visitors of the lower order, indeed of a rank ill-accommoding with its appearance, which was highly respectable: he was speedily informed that the persons he saw, were a few staunch friends of Reform, assembling to dine with a knot of *ultras* of their own politics, who, strange to say, having some little property to lose, still gave their weight and countenance to the revolutionary principles

avowed by their rapacious or ignorant inferiors.

Anxious to shun the noise and notoriety of such a party, Henry sought and obtained a small quiet room, in which his little dinner was civilly and speedily served; and refreshed by the meal, and his constant consoler—a bottle of claret, he was picking his teeth as carelessly as such a man could do any thing, and conning the London paper of the preceding day, when he read amongst other pieces of fashionable intelligence, the following:—

“ Lord Castleton and family have left town for Yarmouth *in the Isle of Wight*, whence his Lordship will proceed into Dorsetshire.”

The effect likely to be produced by such a “curious coincidence” upon any body else, came rather as a corroboration of his ordinary fate to Henry than as a surprise, and excited no other feeling in his mind than a determination, at all events, not to return to Yarmouth *in Norfolk*, which he had just left, and where he foresaw, the moment this paragraph got wind, he should be stigmatized as a pretender, an impostor, and, perhaps, a swindler. His disgust at the place, which he

had mistaken for another of the same name in another part of the kingdom, was such, that no earthly inducement would have got him back to it; therefore, ringing the bell, he enquired whether a messenger could be sent immediately to Yarmouth; in answer to which the landlord in the civilest manner expressed his regret that the grand political party required the services of all his attendants, but that, if the gentleman was not himself returning to Yarmouth that night, there were no less than two of his post-chaises engaged to carry company thither, and that any message he chose to send, either of his drivers would most readily take for him. This was all as it should be; but could he have a bed? There was the rub: if he had spoken only half-an-hour before, he certainly could, but at present the only accommodation vacant, owing to the influx of visitors in the house, was one bed in a double-bedded room; the other bed, in the same room, being already engaged by a gentleman who had arrived since Henry.

This was provoking indeed; the objection at any other time would have been insurmountable; but necessity, as Mr. Templeman had

practically informed Henry, has no law, and foreseeing that there was literally no alternative, he resolved to put up with the accommodation which so unsatisfactorily presented itself. Anxious, however, not to be seen by the partner of his apartment, he resolved at the same time to get to bed early, and lie late, thus avoiding the inconvenience of dressing or undressing in the company of a perfect stranger; and in pursuance of this scheme, he gave his landlord a bank of England note for ten pounds, with which he desired the man who went to Yarmouth to pay his bill at the Wrestlers, and after having done so, to bring over his portmanteau, adding, that the people at the inn did not know his name, but that the trunk he was to bring, belonged to the gentleman who had walked out that morning, and who had sent the money.

The landlord, the civilest of his tribe, promised all this, and moreover, as the sequel will shew, performed all that he promised. The noisy conviviality of the radical party was kept up with the most assiduous zeal, and the voices of patriots, since convicted and executed for the blackest crimes, rang through

the house in peals of vulgar revelry. At ten, however, Henry sought his room—that sleeping partnership in which he had been unaccountably and irremediably involved, and having selected with considerable foresight the better bed of the two, enveloped himself in its curtains, and extinguished his candle.

He had not been long in this snug retreat before the sound of advancing steps arrested his attention. They approached the room, the door opened, and the sharer of his apartment, escorted by a chambermaid, entered: the blooming virgin pointed to the unoccupied bed as his, insinuating by soft words and silent gestures that his companion was already in his place, and perhaps asleep.

It was quite evident, from the subdued tone in which the new comer spoke, and the gentlemanly manner he displayed in expressing himself, that he was not one of those shirtless worthies who had been getting tipsy for the good of their country: and when he desired, in a remarkably mild accent, to be called early, Henry thought the voice was familiar to him; still he remained without moving, in order to secure himself from any interrup-

tion in his novel and embarrassing situation. The maid departed—the door was closed—his companion began to undress himself;—still Harry affected to sleep, till a deep-drawn sigh, and a half-stifled exclamation of sorrow from the stranger, roused his attention and awakened all his sympathies; and just as the object of his solicitude had extended his hand to “put out the light,”—Henry suddenly raised himself in bed, peeped through the curtains, and “then” — beheld — SIR HARRY LAVINGTON!

CHAPTER XII.

Now might I do it, now he's praying,
And now I'll do't!—and so he goes to Heaven!
And so am I revenged!"

WHAT Henry felt, at the sight of this horrible vision, who shall attempt to describe?—the cause and author of all his ills—the man by whom he had been betrayed and dishonoured, was destined to pass the night in the same room with him!

How could a person of Lavington's rank, and fashionable pursuits, be drawn into such an association?—What did it mean?—why was he there?—why alone?—where was the guilty partner of his pleasure?—had she in turn abandoned *him*?—

Lavington slumbered, and Henry was alone

with him—the room was dark—every thing seemed quiet in the apartment, except the heavy breathing of my hero's bitter enemy—the enemy of his peace—the murderer of his respectability. Murder did I say?—gracious Heaven! what a word—could such a thought enter the imagination of the honourable, high-spirited Henry Merton?—How weak—how dreadfully weak is human nature!—how awfully strong the passions which agitate her!

How the aptness of time and circumstance for vengeance might have affected Henry, or how nobly religion and humanity struggled with earthly feelings, I cannot say; for as my hero and Lavington only were present in the chamber, it is impossible, till I have had it detailed to me by one or other of the unhappy pair, that I should be competent to relate what occurred during this eventful night.

Henry was awake, up, and out early in the morning; I believe he rose before the sun, apparently anxious to avoid any personal rencontre with the destroyer of his peace. At eight o'clock, I know, he was walking on the firm sands, at the foot of the tall cliffs of

Lowestoffe, returning towards the inn, when three or four men, who had evidently been on the look-out for him, surrounded, and without any ceremony seized him as their prisoner.

Unprepared for resistance, Henry made none; nor did he express any violent alarm at his sudden and extraordinary captivity. Convinced in this land of freedom that justice would eventually be done, he enquired the cause, and was told by one, who had an air of authority about him, that *he* knew what they wanted him for. He then appeared much agitated, trembled, and seemed nearly overcome by the novelty of his situation, the irksomeness of which was considerably increased by the increasing crowd which assembled, and hung upon the rear of their march, as he supposed, towards the inn; but he was soon undeceived as to the place of his destination, and early as it was, he was conveyed to the residence of a neighbouring Magistrate.

Not a word did the culprit utter; he looked amazed and stupified; and the sleepless wretched night he had passed, had not dimi-

nished the haggard paleness which grief and vexation had spread over his countenance.

As soon as time had been given for the Justice to prepare for the examination, and the witnesses to be collected at his residence, Henry was ushered into his presence, where, drawn up in array against him, he found the landlord of the inn, the waiter, and the chambermaid. Upon a question from the Bench, as to who he was?—he thought it right to ask, in the first instance, why he was brought there?

“The charge, young man, you know, is a serious one,” said the Magistrate, “and your affected ignorance of its nature is not likely to do you much good—you are brought here on a charge of murder.”

Henry looked at the Magistrate with a firm and contemptuous expression of countenance, but said not a word.

“You slept last night at the house of that man standing beside you?”

“I did.”

“Answer no question likely to involve yourself, young man,” said a professional gentleman, who happened to be present.

“ I admit that fact, at all events,” said Henry.

“ What have you done with the body of the unfortunate man who slept in the same room with you ?”

“ Body !” said Henry, with much apparent surprise,—“ I left him sleeping when I quitted the apartment.”

“ Produce those articles,” said his worship.

And accordingly a bloody knife, which had been discovered under Henry’s bed, was first laid upon the table ; the sheet on which Lavington had slept, bloody, and a neckcloth belonging to him, equally so.

“ Did you never see any of these things before ?”

“ Never,” said Henry ; and he trembled from head to foot.

“ What is your name, young gentleman ?”

“ Merton,” said Henry.

“ From London ?”

“ From London.”

“ Pray, Sir, have not you been at Yarmouth for the last two or three days ?”

“ I have.”

“ Making enquiries for a nobleman whom you affected to expect there ?”

"Not for one whom I affected to expect, but one I did expect to find there."

"Have you not been attempting to pass forged bank notes in this neighbourhood, young man?"

"I, Sir?"

"Yes, Sir, you," said the justice; "this gentleman (pointing to a person who sat near him) is a magistrate of Norfolk, in which the town of Yarmouth is situated, and here is a forged Bank of England note for ten pounds, which, it seems, you sent last night to pay your bill at an inn at that town, having first decamped into another county. Have you any more of these notes about you?—for although the act you have committed within my jurisdiction to-day renders your former conduct light, by comparison, it will be as well we should know the whole history. Has he been searched?"

"No, your Worship," said the constable.

"Let it be done."

Accordingly the pockets of Henry's surtout (a coat so called, in modern acceptation which goes *over* nothing) were turned out, and the pocket-book, handkerchief, and card-case of Sir Harry Lavington taken therefrom, and handed up to the Magistrate.

"What are these?" said his Worship, opening the card-case,—"*Are you Sir Harry Lavington, Sir?*"

"No, Sir."

"How do you account then for having this property in your possession?"

"I can *not* account for it, except that I must have put on Sir Harry Lavington's coat in my hurry this morning, instead of my own."

"That is not very probable, young man: where could you have found his coat? Do you know Sir Harry Lavington?"

"Yes. He it was who slept in the same room with me last night."

"And what do you say is your name, Sir?" said the Norfolk magistrate.

"Merton," answered my hero.

A reference was made to the newspaper which the Norfolk justice had been previously reading, and which he now handed to the Suffolk justice, and after laying their heads together for a certain time, the former said to Harry,

"Are you the Mr. Merton whose name appears in this paper as the plaintiff in an action against Sir Harry Lavington?"

"I am, Sir."

"And," said the Suffolk justice, as if a new light had suddenly burst upon him, "your companion last night was that defendant?"

"It was." An awful pause ensued—it was the silence of conviction upon every mind. After a few moments, "Young man," said the magistrate, "the situation in which you stand is indeed a dreadful one; the character of an assassin is so execrable—so abhorrent to the feelings of Englishmen, as to meet with no pity—to bear no palliation; and yet, when the evidence has been gone through which these persons have to give, it will, I fear, be my duty to send you to your trial for that most detestable offence."

Henry bowed, without uttering a syllable.

The landlord of the inn was then sworn, and deposed that the chambermaid, who was present, came to him and begged him to accompany her to the room where the prisoner and the deceased had slept; that he accordingly went and discovered both beds empty, but that, which the deceased had occupied was much stained with blood; that a neckcloth marked H. L., initials answering to the name stated to

be that of the deceased, was found on the pillow drenched in gore, and that upon a farther search, the knife now produced was discovered concealed under the prisoner's bed.

The chambermaid swore that upon entering the room to call the deceased, as she had been desired to do, she found both beds unoccupied; she described their state to be exactly that, to which the landlord had already deponed, and stated that she was so alarmed that she called up her master, who then examined the apartment.

The ostler and waiter swore that they were also called in, and traced the marks of blood down the stairs, along a passage which opened into the yard at the back of the house, and thence round again across the street to the edge of the cliff; here they lost the traces of the murderer, but they were again visible on the beach, where, of course, the clue was lost, and where, doubtlessly, the body had been disposed of.

Two men who had been at work on the beach near the fishing-houses swore, that early in the morning they saw a man, whom

they believed to be the prisoner, anxiously looking out towards the sea; that a cutter, which they had observed since daylight standing on and off, was laying to, near the shore, that a boat put off from her and remained within two or three hundred yards of the beach for some time, that they saw the prisoner wave his hand to her, that she was pulled nearer the shore, that they lost sight of her for a few minutes only, and they believed she could not succeed in getting him on board, for they saw her pull off again to the cutter which immediately after made sail; and when the alarm of the murder was given, they directed the officers to the spot where she had tried to make the land, and there they, in company with the constable, discovered the prisoner walking, as if returning to Lowestoffe.

Some subordinate corroborative testimony was given, and so decided and convincing was the case, as made out, that there remained nothing for the magistrate to do, but commit my hero to the county gaol; the charge of the attempt to pass the forged note being withdrawn for the present, upon the representation of the Norfolk justice, who felt that, however far Merton's character and respectability might go to

exonerate him from *that* accusation, the peculiar circumstances under which he and Sir Harry Lavington met, together with their delicate connexion, would weigh so strongly against him at the approaching Suffolk assizes, where he was to be tried for the heavier accusation of murder, that it was useless to press the minor charge against him; and the Yarmouth landlord (who had arrived express) having been indemnified for the amount of his bill, Henry was for the present relieved from all difficulty upon that head (except as the event went to character), and at three o'clock in the afternoon was deposited in a post-chaise, escorted by two officers of justice, on his journey to the gaol of Bury St. Edmund's, all the parties being bound over to give evidence against him at the next assizes, which, luckily for him, were not very far distant.

It must be confessed that there never was a more damning chain of evidence than that which had been adduced against Henry, and when all the provocations which he had received, all the wretchedness he had undergone, and all the misfortunes in which he had been involved by Kate and her paramour, were taken into consideration, the ready and credulous listener

to the tale of blood would have found little difficulty in condemning Henry as the assassin:—it becomes *our* duty to consider him innocent, at all events till a jury of his countrymen shall have decided on his fate.

After the commitment of Merton, which was soon blazed abroad in the county paper, and thence transferred to the London journals, the account of the affair headed with the words “Horrid Murder,” was copied in penny-pamphlets, and cried about the streets of London, illustrated with a wood-cut of my hero, in the act of assassinating Sir Harry Lavington; so decided is public judgment in these liberal days, when formed upon premature ex-parte statements and illegal reports of police examinations in the newspapers.

By a singular piece of good fortune for Henry, the assizes were to be held on the Tuesday following his commitment to gaol, and the time, instead of lagging, appeared too short for the preparation of his defence. Mr. Templeman, his own solicitor, upon hearing of the sad event, hastened down from London to his client, to offer him every assistance which he might require. But great indeed was that gentleman’s surprise, and still greater

his sorrow, when he found the object of his solicitude wholly unprepared with any favourable evidence, and able only to controvert all the heavy accusations which were against him by a simple and not very strenuous denial.

It turned out, moreover, that a new witness on the part of the crown, had been secured by the activity of the London police magistrates, and bound over to give his testimony, being, as it was rumoured, all that was wanting, if wanting any thing could be, to complete the chain of evidence against Henry.

With respect to the minor, yet highly important charge, of endeavouring to pass forged notes, Henry was extremely anxious that his character should be cleared of such an accusation before he appeared upon his trial, and therefore gave proper references to his bankers', whence he had drawn sixty pounds the day of his departure from London, part of which he declared the ten pound note in question to be; upon application, by the magistrates at Yarmouth, to the firm, they received a letter, stating, that although they had known Mr. Merton and his father for many years, they were under the necessity of declaring that no such note as the one alluded

to had ever been in their possession, or paid to the order of Mr. Merton.

This intelligence conveyed to him, with an understanding that if by any chance he escaped conviction for the murder, he would be detained to take his trial for the minor offence, was a heavy blow to poor Henry; to be denied by his own bankers—to be criminated by the persons on whom he had relied, and to whom he had referred;—it really did seem as if the Fates had now combined to overwhelm him entirely.

Mr. Templeman himself, it must be confessed, was a good deal staggered, and having in the course of their acquaintance made some pecuniary advances to Henry, though trifling ones, began to be uneasy and nervous; it was clear my hero's life was now not insurable even at the most liberal office in London, and the lawyer, seeing that the freehold property belonging to the young man would be forfeited in case of his conviction, ventured to suggest that he had better make an assignment of it in his favour, previous to the trial, a request which gave Henry more insight into the danger of his case and the solicitude of his

solicitor, than any thing which had previously occurred since his confinement.

He, however, looked at his own circumstances with a degree of fortitude commensurate with their difficulty; and arguing very wisely, that, as making his will does not shorten a man's life, so assigning this property to repay Templeman in case of his conviction, could neither influence the jury, nor strengthen the evidence against him; he accordingly executed the necessary deeds, and surrendered up to his lawyer every thing he possessed in the world, in order to secure himself against the loss of it.

Monday evening came, and with it, the judges. The commission was opened, all the forms gone through, and Wednesday was fixed for the trial. The witnesses on the part of the Crown arrived; but Templeman, who had done every thing he could, for his client, was suddenly and strangely called away to town by urgent business, and was forced to quit him at the very moment at which, if not his aid, at least, his society, was most required.

The day following his departure, and which preceded the trial, passed heavily and dread-

fully with Merton; he had written to Lord Castleton, in the hope of inducing him to come and speak to his character; but his Lordship had either not received the letter, or did not please to answer it.

Wednesday morning dawned; every avenue to the court was crowded to excess; door-keepers were suffocated, barriers knocked down, and every disposable seat was filled by ladies, and men of the first distinction, long before the judge had taken his place. At length the awful moment came; the dispenser of justice entered the tribunal, and seated himself; the various forms were gone through; a breathless expectation reigned amongst the auditors, when Alicia Sophia Elkins was put to the bar, charged with stealing a shoulder of mutton from a butcher's shop-window.

This trial, in which no human being, except the unfortunate prisoner, and the butcher, her prosecutor, was in the smallest degree interested, lasted four hours and a half, not an individual daring to move, lest he should lose his place, and every body fainting with heat where they were. The poor woman was acquitted upon the ground that the joint she

stole, was wrongly described in the indictment, it being in fact, lamb, and not mutton.

After the disposal of this prisoner, a second and third were tried, during which the trials of patience were unremittingly continued to the audience, who at length were compelled to give up all hope for that day, when the learned judge suggested, in consequence of the nature and probable length of the murder case, that it should be tried the first thing the next morning.

Accordingly, the next morning the same scene of squeezing, bribing, fainting, overturning, and upsetting, was enacted, and at twenty minutes after nine Henry Merton was put to the bar, charged with the wilful murder of Sir Henry Lavington, Baronet.

A murmur of sympathy and commiseration ran amongst the ladies, when they saw the sort of person who stood charged with the barbarous deed. Henry felt it impossible at first to raise his eyes, or look even at the Bench; when, however, the arraignment was over, and he ventured to cast a glance at his judge, his feelings were any thing but satis-

factory when he saw, regarding him with a stern expression of interest, mingled with horror at his crime, the same countenance which he had so very recently beheld in Westminster Hall, lighted up into an expression of ridicule and contempt, at his outrageous demand for damages against the very man of whose murder he now stood accused.

The case being opened, the witnesses were called; the landlord at Lowestoffe, the chambermaid, the waiter, the ostler, the fishermen, all gave their evidence, clearly and distinctly; it bore the ordeal of rigid cross-examination unmoved and unaltered.

The new witness from London was then examined. It was Sir Harry Lavington's own servant, who deposed that Sir Harry left town on the morning of the day, stated in the indictment; that he merely said he was going into the country, but that he should be back on the following day; that he knew Sir Harry was going into Essex, but that he had desired him to say, should any enquiries be made for him, that he was gone to Brighton; since that time, no intelligence had been received from Sir Harry, or of him.

"You are, up to the present moment, in the family of Sir Harry Lavington?" asked the counsel for the Crown.

"I am."

"Is there any other person resident in his house or lodgings besides yourself?"

"Yes—in the lodgings there is a man-servant, and two grooms with Sir Harry's horses at the stables."

"No other servants?—no female servants?"

"None: the female servants were discharged after my lady—that is, Mrs. Merton, the wife of that gentleman at the bar, as *we* ran away with—went off from my master with young Count Leavingstake."

"Has she then left Lavington?" exclaimed Merton unconsciously, in a tone which excited the strongest sympathy of all the hearers.

"Yes; these three weeks, and more," said the man, harshly; "and I wish she never had come, with all my heart and soul."

Henry dropped his head upon his folded arms, and raised it not again, till the Judge told him, if he had any thing to say in his defence, *that* was the proper time.

Henry's defence was short, but powerful; he

denied the fact; appealed to his known character for a refutation of such a charge as that of murder; declared that, however wounded he might have been by the conduct of the unfortunate deceased, his wrongs never could have perverted his nature, and altered his disposition, so as to have induced him to become an assassin; and concluded a gentlemanly and firm appeal by throwing himself upon the wisdom and justice of the Judge and Jury.

He said, in continuation, that he had expected to see some friends in Court, who would have spoken to his character; but he hoped the disappointment, in all probability consequent upon the distance from town, and the shortness of the time of preparation, would not weigh against him, with the Jury, in the consideration of his unhappy case.

The Judge then proceeded to sum up; and in recapitulating the testimony of all the witnesses, alluded to the traces of blood, the efforts of the prisoner to escape to a vessel, which for some reason which did not appear he was unable to reach, the acknowledged animosity naturally existing between the parties, the extraordinary disappearance of Sir Harry, and, in

short, all the circumstances which bore upon the accusation, enlarging and dilating as he went, most luminously; and concluded by directing them, if it were possible with such a convincing chain of unshaken evidence before them, to have any doubt, which he did not think they could, to give the prisoner the benefit of that doubt, and acquit him of the crime with which he stood charged.

The Jury, moved to tears by the powerful yet hollow address of his Lordship, turned round and consulted for a few minutes, when the Foreman, labouring under the effects of very strong feelings, returned a verdict of—
GUILTY.

The Judge appeared to be equally affected, and seemed as if he intended to delay passing sentence till the Assizes were ended; but just as the turnkeys were removing Merton, one of the counsel rose and stated, that a true Bill had been found against the prisoner, for uttering forged bank-notes, knowing them to be forged, which it had originally been supposed must have gone before the Norfolk Grand Jury; but as the uttering had been committed in Suffolk, the *venue* was laid in that county, and —

The learned Judge here interposed, and avowed it to be his intention to pass sentence of death upon the prisoner, and, under the circumstances, leave him for execution, which must render needless any proceedings upon the other indictment. His Lordship meant, I believe, to have reconsidered the case, and, perhaps, to make himself popular, reprieved Henry; but when he found that crime was habitual with him, that other indictments had been found against him, and, above all, that the tide of public feeling set against him, he suddenly discovered that his private feelings must not interfere with his public duty, and accordingly, addressing himself to our unhappy culprit, proceeded to pronounce the awful fiat of the law—that he was to be taken to the place from whence he came, and thence to the place of execution on the Saturday next ensuing, there to be hanged by the neck, till he was dead.

A solemn silence reigned; and when the Judge prayed for mercy on his soul, there was not a dry eye in the whole Court, except his Lordship's—even the gaolers wept.

CHAPTER XIII.

“ Look, here 's the warrant, Claudio, for thy death !
'Tis now dead midnight, and by eight to-morrow
Thou must be made immortal.”

HENRY was “ taken to the place whence he came,” chained, manacled, and incarcerated in a solitary dungeon like a common murderer. *Like* a common murderer, did I say? He had been pronounced one, by a jury of his countrymen. Was there, then, no hope of reprieve? None.

The judge who tried and sentenced him to die, was exemplary for the even-handedness of his dispensations, and was quoted by the poor and miserable, as upright, lenient, pure, and honourable. To say that amongst English judges there could be found one, sufficiently mean and base to sacrifice a love of justice to

a love of popularity, would be to libel the heads of a noble and honourable profession. But true it is, that in the conduct of him, of whom I am now treating, there certainly did appear a prevalent desire to push the law to its furthest possible extent, against any person characterized as aristocratic or gentlemanly, and a corresponding leniency, towards every thing low and vulgar.

Those who knew his Lordship privately, declared that this rigid impartiality, which he would fain have his conduct shew, had its origin in a sneaking desire for public applause, to evince how independent he was of the Crown, how considerate of the people.

Henry having unhappily, on his trial, exhibited the appearance of good birth and good breeding, had rendered himself a fit object in the eye of his Lordship, whereof to make a great example. The execution of a gentleman for murder, would have a ten-fold effect upon the mobility; it would shew them that the law knows no distinction of persons; it would also ensure them the security of impartiality in decisions to be made against themselves, by his Lordship at any other time; and, above all, it

would be a popular thing to degrade their betters, and bring one aristocrat, at all events, down to the democratic level.

Upright and excellent judge! Good; pious, and virtuous man! When his Lordship comes to be judged at that great tribunal, where "all hearts shall be open," his purity, his meekness, his honour, and his honesty, will be proved. This disclosure, however, will but little affect the present temporal security of poor Merton, who soon found that no alteration was likely to occur in his fate, and prepared himself to meet with fortitude the announcement which was made to him, on the following day, that he was left for execution on the morrow.

During the morning, he was visited by several persons of the highest respectability in the county, who pressed him to confess his crime, since, as they justly said, the evidence was too conclusive to admit even of a shadow of doubt; had it not been so, (they added,) the humane magistrate who tried him, would have rejoiced in giving him the benefit of it, and had *said as much* at dinner, the day before.

Sayings are not doings; and while his Lordship sipped his claret and *talked* of mercy, he

was secretly chuckling with pleasure, at the success of his double manœuvre ; for while the “gentlemen” by whom he was surrounded, were charmed with the benignity of his sentiments and the amiability of his conversation, the “people” without, were blessing his name for the rigid impartiality of his severity.

To all the requests made by Henry’s visitors upon this point, he deigned no reply ; he only protested his innocence of the crime with which he stood charged, and had the satisfaction of perceiving that not one human being believed him, when he did so.

His apparent callousness to the horrors of his present situation, is to me quite accountable. He had been charged with, and tried for, murder ; he had been found guilty, and sentenced to die ; if he were that instant reprieved, or even pardoned, *cui bono*?—he could never again appear in the world—he must live an exile from society—he must relinquish all hope of ever possessing his adored Fanny. It was this view of the subject which made him regard the preparations for his death with an apparently placid indifference.

There was something dreadful in the mystery

of his silence to those around him, and in the obstinate aversion he evinced from any confession, or communication upon the subject with any body. He asked for writing-materials, which were furnished—he wrote to his beloved Fanny, and in that letter denied the murder—prayed for her happiness, and lamented his own bitter fate. To no one else did he address a line.

Templeman, his lawyer, did not come to him as he had expected ; but he was visited by Sir Harry Lavington's butler, who was sent for at his request ; and it was awful to see the repugnance with which the faithful fellow gazed upon the murderer of his kind master. From *him* Henry learned (which was, indeed, the object of his sending for him,) that Kate had quarrelled with Sir Harry, and had quitted him for France, under the protection of one of his brother officers. All feeling of sympathy, or sorrow for her, was now extinguished, and Merton could only look back with horror and surprise, upon a creature, whose person and manners were so fascinating, and whose heart and mind were so depraved.

Lord Castleton's neglect of him, cut my poor

hero to the soul; he felt, that had any human being, with whom, at any period of his life, he had been as intimate as Lord Castleton had been with him, fallen into such a pit of misery, he would have flown, at any risk of convenience, or of safety, to console and support him. Besides, Lord Castleton owed him more than he could ever have owed Lord Castleton; *he* must have surely known the real character and disposition of the animated rarity with which he had encumbered his young friend, even if he had not (as the world were base enough to say he had) been amongst the number of those who were practically satisfied of her frailty.

To be sure there never was any human being so encircled by evils, by griefs and misfortunes, as my poor hero; it is impossible not to pity him, even under the accumulation of guilt where we now find him--and yet the catalogue of his crimes was not full. He contemplated another--another murder, of which he never could repent. He had resolved, if possible, to save himself from the degradation of a public execution, by an act, which, when committed by the best and most amiable, remains

a stain upon the character, a blot on the escutcheon,—for ever.

To die, he was prepared—he could single out no action of his life, as they passed in review before him, to which he could conscientiously appropriate the name of crime, except the last, the dreadful deed with which he stood charged,—of which he had been convicted. He prayed—and prayed for fortitude to bear his lot like a man; but the horror, the worldly horror, of being killed on a public scaffold by the public executioner, glared upon him, and overcame that serenity and peace of mind, so earnestly to be desired in his situation.

The clock was striking five—the bright sun gleamed through his prison-bars, and the birds outside the grated window were singing gaily—as the sound of the bell announcing the hour, rang on his ear, what were the thoughts of the unhappy culprit?—To-morrow at the same hour, he should be stretched in death; his body delivered to the knife of the surgeon—the heart that beat in his breast with every tender feeling of love, of peace with all the world, would, perhaps, be torn from its seat, the object of philosophical research, or even of

professional ribaldry. The form that had been nurtured by his anxious parents, who, in the watchfulness of their care over his infancy, had sheltered him from the night-breeze, lest it should blow too strongly on him, would be lacerated, exposed, and exhibited as an example of terror to his gazing countrymen! The thought was, of itself, enough to kill him; but the effect it *did* produce, was worse than the death, which Nature would have brought. His mind was made up—his determination formed, and self-destruction was the object of his meditation.

Faint and exhausted as the poor prisoner felt himself, the gaoler, whose pity and attention were apparently unremitting, allowed him refreshment not warranted by law. With the food thus given him, he became possessed of a knife:—the joy with which he viewed the instrument of death, passed unnoticed by the keeper of the prison, who left his wretched charge to take his meal alone.

No time was to be lost—snatching the weapon from the table, Henry flung himself upon his bed, and uttering a short, an earnest prayer to Heaven for forgiveness, raised his arm firmly,

and striking boldly and with all his force, drove its bright point against his palpitating heart. The knife was resisted by some hard substance, and shivered from its very handle. Astonished at the miraculous preservation, he gazed at the broken implement as it lay on the floor, and sought the cause of his safety—he found the object which had warded off the blow—he drew it from his bosom—it was his mother's picture!

He started back as he gazed upon it—there was the living smile—the smile of love—the look—the very form of her, who had given him birth.—It was a tacit appeal from a guardian angel—it was irresistible; and in another prayer to his Maker, he once more implored forgiveness for the crime which he had *virtually* committed, and from the actual sin of which, the image of his sainted parent alone had saved him.

Poor Henry's thoughts and feelings from this moment flowed in a new channel, and, abandoning the visionary relief, which he at one time thought an act of desperation would afford him, he resolved to await patiently the execution of the dreadful sentence of the law, which (arguing as he previously had argued upon an acquittal) made him no worse than the

sentence itself. To have *deserved* death by the hands of the common hangman, was the blow to be dreaded; the endurance of it was but a secondary suffering. Abstracting, then, all his cares from this world, in the society of the chaplain of the prison he passed the evening preceding the fatal day in which his short and painful life was to terminate.

The hours appeared doubly winged, so differently does time, at different seasons, seem to move; he fancied his interview with the clergyman brief—oh! how much too brief! And when they parted for the night, his companion promising to be with him early in the morning, it was, indeed, an awful separation—all the scenes of his past life came into his mind—the mystery in which his fate had been involved—the threats to which he had been subjected—the miseries he had endured, and above all, his adored Fanny—still, still, in the hour of danger, in the day of death, she ruled and reigned the mistress of his aching heart. One word from her—one look—but it was all too late.

At length Henry fell into a short and feverish sleep, from which he was awakened by the opening of his cell-door, and the appearance of

the gaoler and the chaplain; and after rising and dressing himself as well as he could, encumbered as he was with heavy fetters, he joined in devotion with his exemplary and benevolent companion. During the time in which they were thus employed, the heavy tolling of the bell, which announced the hour of death at hand, struck upon his ear; but he bore it firmly; nor would he have flinched in this appalling moment, had he not beheld the pious pastor's eyes filled with tears. To have excited such an interest, was new—was soothing to him—but it unmanned him, and for the first time since his incarceration, he wept.

Soon, too soon were they interrupted by the arrival of the sheriff, and other officers, who came to attend the unhappy prisoner to the chapel, previous to the execution. He was told that his irons would now be taken off, that he might, without inconvenience, join in the service about to be performed. Accordingly he was removed into the gaoler's apartments, where the person appointed to strike off the fetters, was in readiness, and having performed the operation, retired, leaving my poor Henry free and unshackled, but, alas! ready for death.

While thus alone—whether so left purposely, or not, I cannot say—Henry saw, that although the window of the room in which he was placed, was high from the floor, still it was open and without bars. The hope—the gleam which burst upon him—the straw which the drowning man saw floating near him, thrilled through his frame. Could he reach the window? whither did it lead?—ought he to escape? would it not convince the world of his guilt? were they not already convinced of it? would his death exonerate him from suspicion, or clear his character? While there is life, there is hope—something might turn up if he escaped—all must end speedily, if he slighted the opportunity. All this was necessarily resolved in his mind in the twinkling of an eye—he decided for flight—how then was it to be accomplished?

There were difficulties apparently insurmountable in the way of the adoption of his hazardous enterprise; but every thing was at stake, and, in the hasty calculations of the moment, it seemed perfectly clear that his case could not possibly be made worse, by any attempt to elude the ulterior punishment, more than which, not even the learned and upright

judge who tried him, could inflict upon the wickedest, or richest man in the empire.

Henry hastily drew, with as little noise as possible, the table which stood opposite, under the window, and placing one of the chairs upon it, took the precaution of bolting the room-door,—on this frail pyramid he stepped. Judge his surprise, when his eye reached the aperture, to find that it gave to meadows and fields, and was, in fact, an opening in what every where else, was the dead prison wall. Not an eye commanded it—not an instant was to be lost; and, catching by his hands on the sill of the window, he dropped from his hold upon the turf.

Whither was he now to fly?—in a few minutes the alarm would be given—decision was necessary—speed essentially so; and therefore, without attempting to exercise judgment, he trusted entirely to fate, and ran across the field in which he found himself, till he reached a thick and almost impervious hedge, and then bounding over a stile, and getting to the other side of it, he made, as it were, a cover to his march, in which he proceeded, certainly at no very slow pace, for more than half-an-hour,

when he found the little path he was following open into a village which evidently was on the high road, and to which the way he had chosen was a *near cut*, resembling in its character and use, that which he had so unfortunately taken under very different circumstances at Carlton.

Marriage and hanging are somewhere oddly enough coupled in a proverb; and it certainly did appear that, if he had failed in the infliction of one, he had succeeded in escaping from the other:—not that he ventured to look back, nor, perhaps, did he calculate that, although concealed from the window of the prison whence he had leaped for liberty, he was as much exposed to the back windows of forty houses in the town as the French prince at Cadiz was exposed to the fire of forty pieces of Spanish cannon;—would the one had escaped as honourably and as securely as the other!

Henry deemed it unwise to enter the village, where the appearance of a breathless gentleman might create a suspicion, and excite a very undesirable sensation: he bolted therefore, into the door of the first cottage which he reached, and which stood invitingly

open. Here, singing with heartfelt glee, stood a tall, rosy-cheeked, honest-looking woman, washing at her tub, as free from care as from crime. She started at the unexpected intrusion of Merton, dropped him a curtsey, and ceased her song.

Henry's object, as my readers will easily perceive, was, if possible, to remain in this humble dwelling till night, when he might procure some conveyance from the neighbourhood of his prison, and eventually escape the ignominious death which awaited him. He apologized graciously to his hostess for his abrupt entrance, but, stammering out most civilly the little he had to say, told her that he was very much fatigued, and would feel obliged to her if she would allow him to rest himself.

"Allow! dear heart, Sur," said the dame, "kindly welcome, Sur, kindly welcome: sit ye down here, Squire!"

Saying which she dusted the best chair with her chequered apron.

"I am extremely obliged to you," said Merton; "do you live here alone?" anxious to ascertain the extent of her family, and the number of persons who must necessarily be

admitted into his confidence in a case of emergency.

"No, Sur," said Mrs. Harland, (that was her name,) "no; I have a daughter, Sur—Susan;—she and I have lived here ever since the death of my poor master. We are very happy, Sur: what with my doing a bit o' washing, and she doing a bit o' needle-work, (she's very cute at that,) we makes both ends meet, uncommon well, I do assure you, Sur, thank God for it!"

"Where is your daughter?" said Merton, anxious, above all other things, to get the cottage-door shut.

"Why, where in the name of wonder do you think she be gane, Sur? She be gane to see a sight she'll be sick enow on, afore she be back, as I do think:—she be gane to see that young chap hanged for murdering his friend."

"Ah—yes, ma'am," said Henry, looking as if he were hanged already.

"I hope, howsumever, as she be gone she won't be disappointed," added the kind, good-natured soul. "I shouldn't mind a bit seeing it myself, if I ever did go to such sights: I've no pity whatever upon murderers, and

specially none for him;—nothing's too bad for 'um, is there, Sur?"

"No—certainly—there is no palliation," said the person in question.

"I wish wi' all my heart Susan weré back; sure it must be over by this time. I'm all in a fuss to get up to the parsonage, where our poor minister is a lying very sick and ill, poor gentleman, though he don't know a word of all this affair at the 'sizes."

"What affair?"

"Why, la, don't you know," said Mrs. Harland, "that young chap Merton, as is by this time hanged, is our parson's son-in-law, and has treated poor Miss Kate—I nursed she, and ought to knaw her—he has treated she shameful all through, Sur, I can tell you that."

"Ah, indeed!" said Merton, "and her father is the clergyman here?"

"Poor dear old gentleman—he is quite bed-ridden, and near blind!" answered the dame, "and it hurt him very much that my lord, who used to live here one time—Don't you see them chimnies among the trees yander?"

"Yes, I see," said poor Harry, who felt that of all places in the country this was the last

to which he ought to have fled for shelter, and of all cottages in the place, Mrs. Harland's the last of those.

"Well, then, my lord's behaviour has been cruel to him, Sur; for people always said that Miss Kate was my lord's daughter; and since her mother's death she hasn't never been near the parsonage: nor when she married that chap, never a bit o' notice did neither of them take of the ould man, no more nor if he had been a stick or a stone."

"And does he know nothing of this trial—this ——"

"Not a bit—not a bit. His own daughter, as I always called her, Miss Betsy, she ware always my favourite; she be married to the old gentleman's curate, and they have kept all this from him."

"Then Mrs. Etherington——"

"Why, la! Sur, how do you know his name's Etherington? I never named no names."

"Yes,—eh—did not you?—eh," said Henry, mightily confused.

"No; but I suppose you are only flouting at me, and knows the whole pedigree on't."

"Not I."

"Well, she, ould Mrs. Etherington, was a right bad one; she used to be—' Lord, how come you so!' every night, as regular as she went to bed, and every body knew the tricks she played wi' my lord; and if my lady had not been just as bad, she never would have had Miss Kate home; howsumever, she has been served quite right; there's always a Providence in these things: she's run away, and her husband is dead by this time; and——oh, here's Susan come back. Ah, look at the sly toad, she has left Tom Bunbury at the bottom o' foot-path, least I should be angry with her."

She had scarcely uttered these words when Susan, with a pair of eyes like sloes, and cheeks like roses, made her appearance at the door, and imparted, in a tone of utter disappointment, the escape of the culprit.

"How ware him dressed?" said Mrs. Harland—evidently struck with some sudden fancy.

"How should I know, mother?" said Susan.

"Ware he in black, I wonder?" said her mother, casting her eyes very unpleasantly over Henry's costume.

"I don't know," answered the girl, evidently out of humour with her disappointment

of the sight; "however, Sparks the constable told me he could not get clear away, for that there be heaps o' folks after him, all round about."

Pleasant intelligence for Mr. Merton!

"Well," said Mrs. Harland, somewhat doubting her guest, and seeing him determined not to quit the cottage, "Susan, d'you run up to the parsonage and ask your young mistress if I be looked for yet; say, I dares to say I shan't be long, and I'll come up whenever I be wanted; and ask how dear old master be: and 'bove all things, do ye make haste."

"Trust I for that, mother," said Susan, "if they don't keep I at the Doctor's;" and away went Susan.

"That's strange now, Sir, that chap's escaping," said Mrs. Harland, "ben't it—it's all just because he is a bit of a gentleman:—they don't like hanging gentlefolk in this county, there's so many on 'em desarves it."

"I suspect there is nobody to blame here," said Henry.

"Why?"

"I mean that he got out of the window without any help."

“ Out o’ what window, young gentleman?—Lard, Lard—why, sure—good, mercy upon us—and you are a stranger too !”

“ Well.”

“ Oh Lard—oh dearee me, if you should be the man !”

“ I AM THE MAN !” said Merton.

“ Be you guilty ? Have those white hands shed human cretur’s blood ?”

“ Never !” cried Henry, “ my escape is an interference of Providence.”

“ And you be innocent?—speak truth, do ye now.”

“ Believe me I am !”—said he,—as what else should he say ?—

A violent knocking at the door, which was luckily shut, announced the officers of justice in search of the runaway. “ Be Mrs. Harland within !” said a voice outside, which she recognized as that of Sparks the constable.

“ Ay, ay, Mr. Sparks, I be coming, Sur !”

“ Will you betray me ?” said Merton, imploringly.

“ No :—hide in this bed,” said the dame.—He threw himself upon the pallet.—“ Stir not, and make no noise ;—you munna be killed, for my poor old master’s sake.”

Saying which, she rapidly covered him up with the bedclothes, and proceeded to open the door.

"Where be the prisoner?" said Sparks.

"What prisoner?" said Mrs. Harland.

"He, as has tipped us leg-bail this morning!" said Sparks.

"How should I know, Mr. Sparks?" said Mrs. Harland.

"Because he be here, and we do know it!" said a second Dogberry who was of the party.

"Oh, we stands no nonsense!" rejoined the leader of the corps.

"I knows nothing about it, I'm sure," said the dame with a confidence which with any set of people worse informed, might have passed for innocence.

"We'll see that;—we know the man be here!"

"How?"

"That's tellings," said Sparks smartly.

"Oh, tell *she*!" muttered one of his companions.

"Well, then, your daughter Susan told us, there were a man here, and we never ha' lost sight o' your door since; there, now!"

This was a thunderbolt to old Honesty.

Henry resolved upon jumping up and surrendering himself. The crisis was at hand—the moment full of difficulty and danger; but Mrs. Harland, although a laundress, and a poor simple body in her way, was—a woman.

The presence of mind which never forsakes her sex, even in situations the most trying, and under circumstances the most astounding, was ready at her command.

“He is here!” whispered she.

“Ah!—ah!”

“False woman!” thought Henry.

“He be up in the loft, up the ladder, there!” said the dame in a whisper: “he be locked up safe in my apple and ’tatoe horde; but he is armed, and bold:—you three won’t be too much for him, so take my counsel;—go, all o’ ye together, and if there be any scuffle I can call in our neighbours to lend a hand!”

“Oh, Mrs. Harland, ye can speak truth, now ye be found out!” said Sparks.

“Come along then: you two go up first, I’ll go last, and don’t ye make no pother nor noise. I ha’ gotten a cutlash—he shan’t ’scape. Mind how you mount, ould Middleton,” said Sparks
“steady there—gently—hush!—”

And so they mounted to the loft, by the ladder; but no sooner was the foot of Sparks off the highest round of it, than Mrs. Harland, removing it from the aperture, laid it quietly on the floor, and opening the cottage door, pushed my hero, who had leaped from his hiding-place, out.

"Hush," cried the trembling woman,—“you belong to my old master—you shall be safe for me—run to the parsonage—you will be sheltered there. God will protect you if you be innocent—may he pardon you if you be guilty!”

He kissed her hand—bathed it in tears, and followed the path she pointed out, to the parsonage. He flew, rather than ran, and was out of sight in a moment.

She gently restored the ladder to its place.

“Be ye coming down, Sparks?” cried she, in a shrill tone. “Coming down!” said Sparks, “why, what fool’s errand did you send us up here for?—here be nothing but a spade, two sacks, a heap of inions, and an ould spinning-wheel.”

“Well, sure, I kna’d that,” said the dame.

“Why did ye send us up on such a goose’s message then?” said Sparks, who felt his dig-

nity considerably offended by the trick which the steady old body had so friskily and unaccountably played off upon him.

“Do ye mind the story you tould me, 'bout London monyment being burned down last winter, Master Sparks?” said Mrs. Harland.

“Ay, well, mistress, but that ware a joke; now this be no joke, because, while we were up there a rummaging over your sacks and things, that Merton may just clean have got away.”

“Whose fault's that?—why should I know any thing about the man?” said the lady of the house.

“Because Sukey tould us so, Mrs. Harland,” said old Middleton.

“Sukey is a silly wench for her pains, then.”

“Well, hang me,” said the third pursuer, who, like the parrot in the fable, did not say much, but evidently thought the more—“hang me if I don't think the man *were* here, after all.”

“Are you satisfied he ben't here now?” said Mrs. Harland.

“Yes,” said Sparks, “he ben't here *now*,”—

striking the bed which Henry had but just left, with his stick.

“Then if you have no more business with I, I’ll wish you good-day, for I be going up to Doctor’s,” said the laundress.

“Go thy way then, dame,” said Sparks,—
“and I’ll mind how I ever tell thee a cock and a bull story again—for if there be one thing in this world I do hate more than another, it be mounting up a ladder.”

“In fear of breaking your neck by the fall, I warrant me,” said the waggish dame.

“Ah, you be always the same, Mrs. Harland,” said old Middleton—“you, and I come o’ two cute families, don’t us?”

And in little provincial gibings and jeerings of each other, did the party thus indulge, till Mrs. Harland, having partly joked, and partly jostled the triumvirate out of her cottage, shut the door, put the key into her pocket, and followed Henry to the parsonage.

CHAPTER XIV.

“Thy hope is young, thy heart is strong, but yet a day
may be,
When thou shalt weep in dungeon deep, and none
thy weeping see.”

WHEN Henry reached the parsonage, he was at a loss by what name to enquire for his sister-in-law, Mrs. Harland's favourite Miss Betsy; but, concluding that there was but one mistress of the house, he asked for her by that designation, and was told that she had just walked out, while Mr. Etherington slumbered. The old gentleman's bell sounding at the moment, announced that he had ceased to sleep; and therefore Henry, resolving in his mind to conceal all the history of his trial, imprisonment, and escape, of which his hostess at the cottage had already told him the poor invalid was perfectly ignorant, sent up a message, that if Mr. Etherington were well enough to

receive a visitor not personally known to him, but who was a connexion of his own, that visitor would gladly avail himself of the permission to see him.

The truth is, that Henry, conscious how notorious his figure and face must be in the neighbourhood since his recent exposure at the bar of a crowded court, was extremely anxious to get shelter from his active pursuers, and prudently considered that a sick man's chamber would be the most desirable sanctuary in the world; and therefore pressed himself, perhaps somewhat importunately, upon the dying pastor. The servant, however, brought word that Mr. Etherington would gladly admit his guest, and civilly lamented that there had been nobody below stairs to greet him to the parsonage.

There was a charming economy, and neatness, and prettiness, almost amounting to elegance, about the apartment into which Henry had been shewn, perfectly indicative of the taste and pursuits of the owner of the rectory. The comfortable litter, the literary confusion, heaps of books, drawings, music and musical instruments, an apparent superabundance of furniture; in short, it was a crowded snug-

gery ; and the placid stillness of the place, its delicacy and quietude, contrasted with the horrid den whence he had escaped, soothed and calmed his mind, and prepared him for the interesting interview which he was about to enjoy with a father-in-law, so extraordinarily discovered.

He was, after due preparation, ushered upstairs into the sick gentleman's room ; and having waved his hand to the servant, anxious not to discover himself under the circumstances before a witness, the man quitted the apartment, and Henry, advancing to the bed, beheld stretched upon it, the pious and exemplary, yet ill-treated and neglected parent of his faithless wife.

" I know not," said Mr. Etherington, raising himself on the pillow, " to whom I am indebted for this visit ; but I am grateful for the kindness, and lament, Sir, that the absence of my guardian angel, my daughter Eliza, has caused so much delay, and such apparent inattention, in your reception."

" Sir," said Henry, " it is I, who ought on my knees to apologize to you for having thus long delayed—too long, indeed, visiting you, and paying you that respect and attention due

from one so nearly connected with you as I am, however unfortunate the circumstances coincident with the alliance."

"Whom, then, am I listening to?" said Etherington.

"In me, Sir," said Henry, "you see the husband of your elder daughter."

"Mr. Merton!" exclaimed the old gentleman: "I am delighted to find myself, at length, remembered; I—did not expect this, of you now—" and the poor old man actually wept for joy.

"Indeed, Sir," said Henry, "had it been even suggested to me, I should have hastened long ago to solicit your acquaintance: as it is, I come to you, under circumstances which I cannot at the moment explain, and bitterly do I grieve that she, who should have directed me hither, neglected to point out that, which I so clearly perceive would have been my duty."

"Whence do you come now?" said the innocent old man.

"I am last from Lowestoffe," replied Henry, thus equivocating, in consequence of Mrs. Harland's hints; "and I am most anxious to see your daughter Eliza,—I have much, very much, to talk over with her."

“And where is Kate, Sir?” said Etherington, in a peculiar tone, certainly unlike that of affection, and most strikingly so, when compared with that which he adopted when speaking of her sister.

“God knows, Sir,” said Henry: “since her flight I have never seen her, and although I have heard that she has again fled from her original seducer, I am ignorant whither she is gone.”

“What! Sir?—What is it you say?” exclaimed the agonized father: “Kate—my daughter Kate, fled?—left you?—left her husband?”

With all Merton’s caution as to the trial, and the murder of Lavington, touching which subjects his humble friend had put him upon his guard, he did not know that the aged parent (or reputed parent, as auctioneers and lawyers say of manors) of his Kate had been kept in total ignorance of the whole affair of her infidelity, *ab initio*, nor that he had been so kept by the advice of his physicians, who had declared his dissolution to be the almost certain result of the agitation producible by his knowledge of such dreadful facts.

“Tell me, Sir—tell me, I implore you—do

not deceive me—has she played you false?" cried Etherington, in a state of convulsive agony.

"Good Heavens! what have I done?" exclaimed our hero.

"I know it—I know it all; now I know why the London papers have been studiously kept from me;—oh, tell me, I implore you, speak the truth—the whole truth."

"I have said too much to retract, Sir," said Henry; "let me entreat you to compose yourself. Pardon her, pardon her: I have forgiven her;—it was, indeed, my own fault—it was I, who was to blame."

Here, in spite of Merton's anxiety to palliate and qualify, the old gentleman fell into a violent fit of convulsions. Henry instantly rang the bell; in reply to which, not only the servant, but Eliza herself, who had that instant arrived from her walk, attended by her husband, entered the apartment.

In her distress at the alarming appearance of her parent, she passed Henry unheeded, who, catching her husband's arm, led, or rather dragged him from the chamber into an adjoining room.

“For mercy’s sake,” said Henry, “hear me—listen to me. Oh, acquit me of intentional cruelty—I fear I have done incalculable mischief—I have disclosed the secret of Kate’s infidelity to her father!”

“Merciful powers!” exclaimed Wilmore, “he has hitherto been kept in total ignorance of it all.—Whom, then, can I be speaking to?”

“Merton, her husband!”

“The murderer of Lavington!” said Wilmore, starting from him with horror.

“No, no; assure yourself of my innocence of that. Oh, why—why did I come hither to scatter mischief around me? I sought here an asylum till night from my pursuers.”

“Did you tell him that, too?” asked Wilmore.

“No—no; I had been cautioned on that point,” replied Merton.

“Mr. Merton, you say you are innocent—am I to understand the assertion, as made upon honour and in confidence and truth?”

“By Heaven, I am!” repeated Merton.

“Then you are safe; but I fear the blow you have innocently inflicted will produce the most dreadful consequences.”

“Henry—oh, Henry!” exclaimed a voice of

alarm and wretchedness, "Wilmore, where are you?"

"My life—my Eliza!"—cried Wilmore.

She rushed into the room, and throwing herself back upon the sofa, screamed, or rather shrieked, gasping for breath—"He is gone!—Wilmore, he is gone!—My beloved father is gone!"

Wilmore and Henry too well knew the meaning of the dreadful words, and flew from the apartment into Mr. Etherington's room, while others ran to Eliza's help: it was all too true—the vital spark had fled; and the pious, exemplary Etherington was past the power of fate in this world!

What Merton's feelings might be upon this new occasion of horror—how he bore this new accumulation of misery, who shall say? What the sensations of Wilmore, under the circumstances, were, it would be equally difficult to describe. The sudden; the unexpected, the extraordinary intrusion of the culprit into their peaceful dwelling, there being only his own evidence of his innocence against a verdict of his countrymen; the ignorance on the part of Eliza as to who he really was; the dreadful

confusion he had, to her so unaccountably, created in the family; the acceleration of her father's dissolution, which was doubtlessly induced by some communication made by the stranger—it was all too late to moralize or argue, here *was* the man;—and Wilmore had a most difficult and distracting part to act.

His doubts as to the conduct to be pursued towards Henry, however, were very soon set at rest. The innocent Susan had been again encountered by Messrs. Sparks, Middleton, and Co., had again been questioned, and in the native innocence of her heart, and in vindication of the truth of her original story, not only persisted in it, but offered the strongest proof of her correctness, by informing them that she had actually seen the man of whom she had before spoken, escape from her mother's house, since; that she had seen him go into the parsonage; and, moreover, that she was sure he was at that moment there.

Here was a probability of circumstance too strong, not to strike even the constables—it was the natural retreat of the Rector's son-in-law. And though Mr. Wilmore, for reasons we can perfectly comprehend, (though, perhaps,

the plebeians could not) had not chosen to commence his acquaintance with his ill-fated brother-in-law, while under confinement upon the repulsive charge upon which he was brought to trial and condemned; still the common feelings of humanity would prompt the inhabitants of the rectory to give him shelter.

Away, therefore, went the officers, demanded and obtained admission to the parsonage in the moment of confusion; and in the midst of the weepings of the servants for their master, in the midst of Eliza's agonising cries, and in the moment when Wilmore was deliberating how he should act towards his unwelcome visitor, laid hands upon the devoted Merton, who felt that his name and appearance would now be eternally associated in the mind of Mrs. Wilmore with the destruction of her parent, as well as the disgrace of her sister; and who really enjoyed relief from the wretchedness he had caused, witnessed, and experienced, by the summons of the law to the scaffold.

It was not till long after Mr. Merton was safely lodged in a cell, with treble gratings and as much iron about his body as ever decorated poor Baron Trenck, that Eliza was made ac-

quainted with the real circumstances of the case, or, in fact, knew who the basilisk was, who had brought death and desolation into the family. The horror she had previously conceived for him, now exceeded all description: she would not hear a word in his vindication, and, above all, treated with contempt and total disbelief the animated protestations of innocence as to Lavington's murder, which he had made to her husband. •

To be sure, Henry did seem to have been born not only to be miserable himself, but to be the cause of misery in others. For, although in point of fact the life of Mr. Etherington might, and in all probability would, have ended in a few days, perhaps hours, still the visitor was, in the eyes of the affectionate daughter, the actual murderer of her parent. Poor Henry was not at all soothed, under the circumstances, at finding Mrs. Harland's cottage shut up, as he passed it on his return to gaol, or at hearing that she had been apprehended and carried before a magistrate, for having knowingly concealed a capital felon, and moreover obstructed the officers of justice in their duty.

When the iron gates of the gaol creaked on

their hinges, and closed after him with a heavy clanging noise, it seemed as if he was shut out for ever from the world. And his first enquiries of the gaoler were, when the sentence of the law was to be executed. He was told, that he should know, as soon as the Sheriff had fixed the time; but he was cautioned to prepare himself for a speedy termination to his sufferings, as, under the circumstances of his escape, decided and immediate measures were absolutely necessary, as well for security as example.

When Henry found himself in a worse and more loathsome cell than the one which he had previously occupied—when he was informed that the Sheriff had directed that he should at night be chained to the floor, the poor young man began to speculate upon what he had done, during the last few hours. He had shortened the life of the man whose daughter he had already driven to destruction,—he had rendered miserable the whole family—had made his name hateful to the whole connexion—he had brought a poor, honest, hard-working woman into trouble and embarrassment—he had shewn a fear of death—had evinced a con-

sequent consciousness of guilt—had violated the confidence reposed in him, by those who had afforded him every consistent accommodation, and had postponed his fate a few hours, for which his mind had been infinitely better prepared the day before, than it was at the present moment. These reflections were added to the galling weight of the irons, the hard floor of the cell in which darkness was only visible, and the absence of the chaplain, who was gone out of the town to an agreeable dinner-party, from which, after taking his cheerful glass of wine in the circle of his affectionate friends, he would quietly return to his house, go to rest, rise to-morrow and dine somewhere else, while Henry, poor wretch, would pine in the depths of sorrow till—when——?

That was the question; and very shortly was it answered. Twelve o'clock the following day, the Sheriff had fixed for the execution; and instead of visiting the prisoner as he had kindly and considerately done before, he sent the under-sheriff, who gave the gaoler the strictest orders as to the necessary degree of restraint to be imposed upon his charge; to which the gaoler, whose feelings were hurt by

the dishonourable conduct of a man, who could be ungentlemanly enough to attempt to escape hanging, after such civil treatment as he had received at *his* hands, took care to adhere most rigidly; and when he locked my hero up for the night, he deposited within his reach a loaf of bread and a pitcher of water, according to the letter of the law, and departed without making a single observation, fastening up the treble doors of the cell and passage with an elaborated nicety, and an extra proportion of noise.

And here we are, within a few hours of the conclusion of the life now inevitably devoted to the claims of justice! In a few hours all that interested us, will have ceased to be! and, most certainly, nothing could more have seriously tended to unsettle his thoughts of unearthly things, than the dreadful scene he had recently witnessed, and in which he had played so prominent a part. He felt that he would give the world to see Wilmore, even but for five minutes, but it was most unreasonable to expect such a gratification. It would have been unnatural that he should, under the circumstances, visit him; and he might have given up all hope of

it; yet, when the doors of his dungeon were opened in the morning, and presented the chaplain to his view, he felt a shock of disappointment, for he had buoyed himself up with the expectation that Wilmore might have strained a point to come to him. He rejoiced, however, again, to have the aid of his spiritual comforter; and having stated to him all the events of the previous morning, and begged him to be the bearer of a letter to the wretched family whose unhappiness he had so materially increased, if not altogether caused, he felt himself more calm and composed than he could have expected at such a crisis. He requested a glass of wine just previously to the arrival of the vehicle which was to convey him to the place of execution; and when it was announced that all was ready, he walked forward to the yard, where his irons were again removed, and his arms pinioned. He proceeded precisely at noon to a mourning-coach which stood at the gate of the prison, and with which he was specially indulged for his last melancholy journey.

It was with difficulty he stepped into the carriage, from the uselessness of his arms: he was almost lifted in, by the chaplain, who, with

the under-sheriff, took their seats within-side, the executioner mounting the box, and the gaoler riding with many of the Sheriff's officers round about the coach.

The bells tolled heavily, and the mournful procession moved slowly and solemnly along. The windows were thronged with people; amongst the number there appeared a predominant proportion of females. The escape had added a new interest to the ceremonial, and, doubtless, attracted an additional concourse of spectators. Henry seldom raised his countenance, but he was calm and collected; even some coarse jokes which were bandied about among the lower classes of the mob passed unheeded; nor did he appear moved, till, at the turning of the road, he lifted his eyes mechanically towards the window of the coach, and beheld on the edge of the highway, the fatal gallows! His heart at that moment beat rapidly—the lofty Tree of Justice was surrounded by a multitude anxiously waiting the arrival of the culprit; and as he approached, they expressed in no decent language their disapprobation of the delay which they seemed to think had unnecessarily occurred in the performance of the

ceremony. Perhaps there never had been a phalanx of human beings assembled on such an occasion, who expressed such universal and collective abhorrence and animosity towards a criminal, as this,—indeed, the avowal of the popular feeling could scarcely be repressed.

The coach having drawn up on the side of the road where a small temporary platform had been erected under the gallows, the chaplain first stepped out, then followed the under-sheriff, and last came—the prisoner. He was as pale as death; and the difficulty of getting out of the carriage, which was equally great with that which he experienced when getting into it, gave to his step and manner the appearance of a terror and trepidation which in fact he did not feel.

He now passed some minutes in devotion with the clergyman. During which time the under-sheriff, who had an engagement upon other business, or, perhaps, pleasure, early in the afternoon, and thought the sooner the affair was over the better, beckoned the executioner, who, after removing Henry's neck-cloth, proceeded to place the fatal noose over his head, and thus accoutred, my poor hero

ascended the ladder which led to the fatal scaffold. The executioner's assistant now mounted the gallows and made fast the halter, when the under-sheriff and Jack Ketch left the more elevated part of the platform, the latter descending, to be ready to knock away the fatal bolt which was to launch Merton into eternity.

The chaplain was alone with him on the drop. They prayed together—he put, as a last question to the wretched man, whether there was any thing he desired to say—any wish he had to express. He answered in the negative, and the chaplain turned to quit him, when a shout was heard in the crowd, followed by a general movement; this again was succeeded by a distant cry of—“Stop the execution!—Stop!—Stop!”

The sea of heads waved to and fro—two or three horsemen were seen riding through the vast and compact mass of people; one, in an agony of exertion, waving his handkerchief to attract attention.

Henry's feelings overcame him—the pause—the suspense—his utter ignorance of all that was passing, (for the cap had been drawn over

his eyes, and he, from being pinioned, was unable to remove it)—the cry of, “Stop the execution!” or something which sounded like it, rang in his ears at the moment when he expected the fatal plank to fall from under him. He staggered and fainted, and would have dropped, had not the chaplain rushed towards him, and caught him in his arms. He withdrew the cap from his face to give him air—the wretched sufferer breathed again. By this time the coming horsemen had reached the scaffold—one of them flew up its steps—a confused murmur again assailed Merton’s ear—he opened his half-closed eyes, and beheld on the platform before him—SIR HARRY LAVINGTON!!!

CHAPTER XV.

“Weel,” said the Deacon to Mrs. Mac-Candlish, as he accepted her offer of a glass of bitters at the bar, “the de’il’s no sae ill as he’s ca’d. It’s pleasant to see a gentleman pay the regard to the business o’ the county that Mr. Glossin does.”

A shout rent the skies, such as seldom had been heard upon that fatal spot. The dead was alive—the guilty innocent! To be thus unexpectedly saved from death and ignominy,—how delightful!—how miraculously, how awfully surprising! To any other man this restoration, not only to safety—but to innocence, not only to life—but to society, would have been, indeed, the most overwhelming, the most stupendously gratifying. But look at poor Merton!—look at his prevailing fate! How is *he* snatched from perdition?—how rescued from the very brink of eternity?—to whom does he owe his preservation, his life, his character?

—to Lavington—to him to whom of all men he would owe the least—to him who had so deeply, so bitterly injured him.

Lavington, however, was too much one of the world, to allow these feelings to interfere with his explanation to the people, so necessary at the moment. He *felt* as well as Merton, the delicacy of their relative situations; but he felt also the importance to the innocent culprit (for culprit *literally* he had been) of an immediate explanation. Nothing, he knew, could be a more satisfactory exoneration of the supposed murderer than the personal appearance of his supposed victim; and, therefore, with as much composure as the difficulty of the circumstances, the excitement of the moment, and his individual exertions had left him, he spoke to the assembled crowd, told them who he was, and begged those nearest him, to communicate to those farther removed from him, the purport of his address; he added, that it could not be expected that he should then enter into details, but he promised them that every particular should be disclosed to the magistrates immediately on their return to the town.

The English heart is susceptible of the strongest impressions and emotions; the mo-

ment that the stern mob, whose cries had been loud for justice upon the patrician blood-spiller, were made to understand, first by the arrival of the Baronet, then by his harangue, and finally by the cordial greetings which Henry received from the sheriffs and chaplain, and others immediately round him, that his innocence was satisfactorily authenticated, and officially recognized, they joined in the most enthusiastic and extravagant testimonies of their joy and exultation.

They lost no time in seizing upon the newly-released victim, and hoisting him upon their shoulders, risked his neck a second time by carrying him in triumph towards the town; others of the mob at the same time leading, patting, and caressing the panting horse which had borne his deliverer to the rescue; while Sir Harry himself, with the sensitive delicacy of high feeling, (of which, however much perverted his accomplishments and talents, he had an abundance,) having mingled with the crowd unobserved, joined in the thickest of the throng, and returned thus unostentatiously to the principal inn.

In the mean time, in spite of the feeble resistance of the *posse comitatus*, a portion of the

multitude were amusing themselves by leveling with the ground, the Tree of Justice, and others, who had procured axes for the purpose, were busying themselves in chopping the apparatus of death into sizeable logs, wherewith to make a huge bonfire at night, in honour of poor Merton's happy escape.

Lavington being, as I have just said, on the one hand conscious how irksome his continued presence would be to Henry, and on the other anxious beyond measure that his exertions in his behalf in the recent danger and difficulty from which he had extricated him, should not have the appearance of an attempted set-off in their accounts, to his past misconduct towards him, informed the high sheriff, to whom he immediately applied himself, that if his deposition to facts was essential to the liberation and final emancipation of Mr. Merton from his charge and custody, he would wish to make every necessary statement immediately, as pressing business called him immediately to London.

The simple fact of Sir Harry Lavington's identity, which was proved by his own servant, who, like a staunch and faithful vassal, swore he would not leave the county till he had seen

the end of that base fellow "as did his master;" and who was still actually in the town, and at the place of execution, would have been, in the estimation of those not learned in the law, of itself sufficient to justify the Sheriff in discharging the late prisoner: however, those who are aware of the legal intricacies of the constitution, well know that in point of law it was no such thing; and, moreover, if it had been, the said Sheriff was a Tory, marvellously afraid of responsibility, and proportionally timid in all his acts and decisions; and when it was represented that a bill of indictment had been preferred against the same person for passing forged bank-notes, he felt it imperatively necessary to have the whole of *that* affair investigated also, and determined upon keeping his prisoner in custody, till he wrote to, and received an answer from, the Secretary of State for the Home Department on the subject. Such is the "*facilis descensus*," even to the minor pandemonium of a county gaol.

Lavington gave the injured husband the benefit of his testimony upon this latter point, by declaring his entire disbelief in the whole story of the forgery. However, the Sheriff turned a

deaf ear to the romantic liberality of the young baronet, and begged him to confine himself to such a statement as he might forward by that night's post to Whitehall.

* Accordingly Sir Harry made a formal deposition, in which he candidly stated the real cause of his appearance at, and disappearance from Lowestoffe, without any regard to his own feelings, or any desire to disguise the real circumstances of the case. The Baronet was gallant and gay—he was young and giddy—he was moreover handsome, elegant, and accomplished, but, alas! he was *poor*; and after having run a glorious course, became so desperately involved, that the charming extravagance of his friend's wife brought on a crisis, of the approach of which she was perfectly aware, and quitted her paramour purposely to avoid it.

I should, in justice to Lavington, correct this last passage. Merton was *not* his friend—barely an acquaintance; and if excuses ever may be made for that, which no sophistry can change from vice, there are certainly more palliations to be found in the case before us, than in any other I perhaps ever met with. However, Mrs. Merton, whose love—if love it

might be called—was of the gay and splendid sort, had a disposition for roving, which nothing but loading her Cupid's wings with gold could restrain. She was, as I first called her, a splendid peril—a fine firework, brilliant and noisy, astounding and dazzling, and beautiful indeed, as an exhibition; but which, if a man brought into his home of homes, would undoubtedly go off some day to his utter confusion, and burn his fingers severely, into the bargain.

She was a strange mixture of contradictions; nor can any of us yet exactly see why she so anxiously married my hero. The world has said, that the difference between *her* prudence and that of Miss Mary Graham of Haversfield, consisted in the precautionary measures she adopted, to insure the preservation of her respectability, under the most particular extremity.

At all events, Lavington's conduct towards Kate's injured husband, in the circumstances of his vindication and release, was highly praiseworthy, as the sequel will shew.

Lavington, as I have just stated, being greatly embarrassed in his circumstances, resolved to

do that, which any body who will take the trouble to steam themselves to Calais, or Boulogne, or Limoniere themselves to the French metropolis, will clearly perceive that many of his friends have done before him—namely, to treat his noisy creditors as Reynard does the hounds; save, that instead of taking to earth, he had resolved to take to the water, and convey the body they were so anxious to possess, beyond the reach of that troublesome law of debtor and creditor, which flourishes with such honest and equitable severity all over the surface of the United Kingdoms.

The wary creditors were, however, too keen for him—they got scent of his proposed migration, and posted at Brighton, Portsmouth, Southampton, Dover, Margate, and indeed at all the probable places of embarkation, lets and hindrances to his “flitting,” as the Scotch call it. He, on the other hand, was too cunning to run himself into this unnecessary danger, and resolved upon starting for Harwich, and thence, per packet, to Holland, as being the least likely route imaginable. Accordingly he proceeded to Harwich, calling himself Mr. Vanderstop, or Clutterbuck, or some equally extra-

ordinary name; and having ascertained that no packet was to sail for two or three days, was preparing, under the happy concealment of the curious appellation he had selected, to remain *perdu* where he was; but the chase was too sharp for him—he had been traced to the spot, and like our waggish Monarch in the oak, (according to Hume's version of the story,) heard enquiries made after himself, by the man-hunters themselves at the bottom of the stairs.

This alarmed him, and finding Essex too hot to hold him, he began to scheme and ruminate what was best to be done. He sent for the master of a cutter, who was specially recommended by mine host of the Cups, to ascertain if he would undertake a trip across the Channel for a reasonable consideration.

“My good friend,” said Sir Harry, “you see I have a pressing emergency to get to Helvoetsluys as soon as possible. My name is Vanderstop—I am a merchant, and every thing depends on my speedy arrival on the Continent.”

“Ay, ay,” said the man, “I know what tack you are on, Sir Harry!”

“What!” exclaimed the petrified baronet, “am I known?”

“Known?” said the Skipper, “ah, known

amongst a thousand. You don't remember me, Sir Harry; many a time you've sailed under my lord's red Burgee in the Club."

"Lord ——, what lord?"

"Lord Morriston, Sir Harry. The Fanny of Cowes, 32 tons, coppered up to the bends; yawl-rigged; and beats the Pearl in a light wind, if she don't, dam' me!"

"But, pray, what are you doing here?"

"I have left my Lord, Sir Harry. His Lordship married—he couldn't attend to the Fanny and my Lady too, Sir Harry! My Lady's not fond of the water;—no 'counting for taste. So I left my Lord, and turned trader!"

"I thought I remembered your face," said Sir Harry, "when you came into the room."

"I know'd *you* the minute I see'd you, Sir Harry," said Burridge; "though you were near Hull-down when they first hailed me!"

"Well, then, since you know me, perhaps you will let me in confidence tell you the reason of my being here."

"Tell—tell that to the marines, Sir Harry: I knows it all afore; here's been two chaps on the look-out for you, for the last three days—this is no roadstead for you, I can tell you!"

“What on earth shall I do!”

“Nothing: you’ll do a deal better on the water, take my word for’t,” said Burridge.

“Can you give me a passage?”

“Snug and comfortable as a judge in an Indyman, if so be as you can wait till Friday; but that I’m sure you can’t.”

“Have you no plan?”

“I think I could scheme for you—after the fashion of running contrabands. If you will take my advice, Sir Harry, you’ll get out of this place as soon as ever you can.”

“Whither am I to go?”

“Shall I tell ye what’s what?—get out o’ this county. You can do’t at night by land, tho’f you musn’t by water. Set every thing below and aloft, studding-sails and all, and bear up for Shotley-gate over the ferry; there you beat the Essex cruizers—that’s Suffolk. If you can find a harbour now, down at Lowestoffe, till Friday morning, and the wind holds as it is, I’ll be laying to, on and off there, and send my mate and Bill, (that’s my boy as is ’prenticed to me,) ashore for you in the boat, Sir Harry!”

“A most excellent and subtle scheme, Mr. Burridge,” said the Baronet.

" You just give an order to the landlord to let me have your trunks, or whatever it may be, and call yourself whatever you like. Leave all the rest to me and my mate, and on Friday morning, please the pigs, Sir Harry, as soon after daylight as possible, you'll see the Phoenix standing on and off for you. You'll know her by her taunt-mast, Sir Harry, and square top-sail; besides, I'll have a blue-and-white diagonal at my gaff, then you can't miss her."

" I am infinitely obliged to you for this scheme," said the embarrassed Baronet, who, having quite satisfied Mr. Burrige of his liberality, and received sufficient testimonials from mine host to ensure the fulfilment of any engagement entered into, delivered Mr. Vanderstop's trunks to the skipper, and having paid his bill, proceeded, as if with Burrige, towards the beach; but, *au lieu de cela*, the moment they lost sight of the inn, the boatman and the Baronet parted company; and while the old tar betook himself to his house where he might safely lodge the baggage till the following afternoon, when he was to sail, the lady-killer commenced a pedestrian excursion, with his wardrobe enclosed in a small valise,

secured by a patent Bramah lock, hanging in his hand, having no object in view except the attainment to Lowestoffe, on or before the following evening.

The pains of pleasure and the sorrows of gaiety are innumerable; and though hidden assiduously from the public eye, day after day incidents are occurring to men of equal rank and fashion with Lavington, not one whit less irksome and galling than this which I am called upon to record. It is only by occasional developements in police reports, or trials in our Courts of Law, that the million see into the arcana of the world they live in. Suffice it to say, that the lancer, who would have perished rather than carry a parcel before company, marched gaily with his little leathern casket under his arm, and never felt the load; so light was his heart at having escaped the watchful myrmidons of the law.

To describe the anxiety which the Baronet endured until he had crossed the ferry and reached Shotley, to enumerate the various little difficulties he encountered in his progress to Ipswich, his artful manœuvres and skilful evasions till at four o'clock the following afternoon he

deposited his body safely at the Spread Eagle at Wrentham, would be to enter too minutely into details in which we are not particularly interested, till the evening commences.

At night^{fall} the gallant Baronet contrived to reach Lowestoffe, where his wistful eyes in the morning were to be blest with the taunted Phoenix, with the blue and white diagonal at her gaff. Arrived, according to the programme, with his valise under his arm, he was received and treated at the inn with a degree of respect and attention not quite equal to that bestowed upon Henry, who had no parcel to carry, Sir Harry having fallen under the imputation of being a pedestrian commercial traveller; for truth must be told, in the general wreck of his affairs he had left the crack regiment of which he was so distinguished a member, and having exchanged to the half-pay of the 60th Foot, conceived the demolition of those crinitory mementos of his former gaiety (his mustachios) absolutely necessary.

Here, then, we have traced Sir Harry to the inn, in perfect security; we know of our own knowledge how safely he retired to rest, and how cautiously he "put out the light."

When he awoke, the room being darkened by the shutters which were closed, he perceived the door ajar, and endeavoured to ascertain whether his nocturnal companion had yet risen. He looked towards the bed which he had occupied, and found the curtains open; he rose, and unfastened the shutters—he saw that the tenant of the couch had fled!

In one minute Sir Harry transformed his absent companion into an officer of the sheriff of Suffolk, or, at least, into one of his London creditors, into whose society ill-luck had thus strangely thrown him. Not a moment was to be lost in deliberation; if he remained where he was, certain ruin ensued; if he got away, perhaps Burridge was already off the place, and he might be saved.

The horrid phantom once conjured up, poor Lavington became terribly alarmed. He had not paid his bill—how could he leave the house? Perhaps the doors were locked, yet his companion was gone; at all events he could make his exit by the same means. He hurried himself in dressing, and just as he wanted to open his valise with the patent lock, suddenly recollected that he had left the key in his writing-desk, which was on board the

Phoenix. To open the thing without a key was hopeless, and therefore he had recourse to a scheme not unfrequently adopted by persons in great haste with little patience, which was no other than that of breaking open the little portmanteau.

To perform this operation, he had recourse to various implements, none of which appeared likely to effect his purpose, when at length he resolved to cut out the lock, and thus obtain access to the articles which were contained in the trunk. In making this attempt, the knife, which was extremely sharp, suddenly shut back with great force upon the ball of the thumb between it and the fore-finger, which caused a most extraordinary effusion of blood, and so much pain, that, in his agony and rage at the moment, Sir Harry threw the treacherous weapon from him with considerable force. It bounded under the bed, whence it was drawn, bloody as it was, in evidence against Merton.

In hopes of staunching the wound, Sir Harry bound his neckcloth round his hand, but in vain; and he relinquished the wrapper, resolving, as men sometimes are apt to do when there appears no remedy for an evil, to let it

take its course ; and accordingly his right hand continued bleeding, while with the left he continued dressing.

In his pain, and the agitation of his mind upon the greater evil of detention, he hastily, though with much difficulty, got his surtout on, and, bleeding as he was, gathered up his damaged valise, and depositing a sovereign on the table to answer any demands the landlord might have upon him, (of which coin no intelligence however had been received from any of the parties concerned,) he proceeded (still bleeding copiously) down the stairs, when finding a door leading into the inn-yard open, he availed himself of the circumstance to make his exit from the house, and, turning back and crossing the street, had the delight of seeing the Phoenix with the blue and white diagonal at her gaff, according to promise, standing on and off.

On the cliff stood the wounded cavalier, and waving his handkerchief as a signal, he had the still greater pleasure of beholding a boat, which had been under the lee of the Phoenix all the time, put off with four hands in her, pulling towards the land. The deceptive dis-

tance of a vessel on the water, added to his anxiety for the trajet of the boat, made it seem an age to him, before she neared the beach. He then descended by a zigzag path, and remained in a state bordering upon madness till past seven o'clock. At a distance, he saw one solitary man walking from him, and near the fishing-houses, two persons evidently employed in their ordinary avocations. While he remained in this perilous anxiety, the boat neared the shore, and the man whom he had seen at the distance, had evidently turned, and was approaching him. This was Merton returning. Sir Harry concealed himself in a niche of the cliff, and looking back again towards the path by which he had descended, saw three men advancing, evidently in pursuit of him. It was all clear, his nocturnal companion had risen thus early to secure the attendance of the bailiffs, and not a moment was to be lost. The boat touched the beach, when more of a surf than was agreeable was rolling in. Lavington watched his opportunity; and at the moment when the distant stranger and the coming group were alike hidden by certain undulations in the cliff and ground, from

the view of the boat, he leaped into it, and threw himself at his length in the bottom of it; the pullers gave way, and having reached the Phoenix in three quarters of an hour, the gallant cutter topped her boom and was off.

In the mean time the pursuers had lost sight of Lavington. Not having yet got sight of Merton, and puzzled what to do when they saw a boat pulling from the shore, they turned off to the men who were at work nearer the town to ask for information, telling them the story of the supposed murder at the inn. By the aid of a glass, the men told the pursuers that they had discovered that the boat came ashore with four pullers and returned with only four pullers. They were certain, therefore, that the murderer had not made his escape, and attributed very judiciously the failure, perhaps, of a concerted scheme for his embarkation, to the appearance of those very constables and others.

“ And,” said one of the men who had the glass in his hand, “ that’s the truth, you may depend on ’t; for yonder is the man they ha’ been trying to get aboard !”

The party looked by turns, and at length discovered, by the aid of the landlord, who

identified him at this distance, the companion of the man, whose bed was drenched in blood, and whose body was missing.

What more was wanting?—the blood had been traced from the bed-room door to the steep edge of the cliff whence the murderer had precipitated his victim—it was the spot where Lavington had first stood waving his handkerchief. From the beach beneath, Heaven only knew whither he had dragged him; but in the confusion of evidence, and the firm belief that one man of the two was actually dead, all the informants upon the occasion had in the first instance mistaken Lavington for Merton, none of them having, in fact, caught a glimpse of the latter till he was returning from his lengthened solitary walk.

Upon *him* they pounced. The blue surtout—the drab pantaloons—the boots—the figure were the same: imagination supplied the rest; and as is, alas! too often the case in matters of equal importance, they made up from the circumstances, as they *might* have happened, a chain of evidence to prove that they actually had.

Lavington said, that when on board the

Phœnix, by the aid of a bad glass, for though the Phœnix was taunt-masted, and had eight-and-twenty cloths in her main-sail, she did not shine in instruments for observation, he saw evidently the seizure of an individual, and pointed it out to Burridge as a most deciding proof of the goodness of his fortune in having escaped, perfectly convinced that the person thus arrested, had been mistaken for *himself*.

Thus while the sailing party were deceived, soothed, and consoled, Mr. Henry Merton was tried and condemned for murder, upon evidence as clear and as circumstantial as ever gentleman in this world was hanged upon; nor was it till, in his retreat in Holland, he read the account of the innocent culprit's apprehension and examination, that Sir Harry was in the smallest degree aware of the interesting manner in which their names had, for a second time, appeared together before the public. He felt there was not a moment to be lost; and he felt, as he told the sheriff and magistrates, that he was bound by other ties than those of common humanity to run every risk, to encounter every danger, to preserve from a shocking and

ignominious death the man, to whose unhappiness he had already so materially contributed.

“These,” said Lavington, “were my real feelings the instant the London papers reached me; and at all events I should have been here even had not that circumstance occurred in the interval, which renders my position in society secure from the intrusion of such visitors as those, whose attachments induced me to fly the country.”

“Might I ask,” said the Glossin of the History, “to what circumstance this new security is owing?”

“By the death of my uncle, who was an Irish Peer, and to whose title I succeed,” said the Viscount Kilcrockery—for such was the real appellation of the late Sir Harry Lavington. “The Act of Union secures my person, and my own principle will secure my creditors from any farther solicitude upon my account.”

When his Lordship—since such he was—had concluded his narrative, it was put into an official shape, and sworn to. He signed the statement, and took his leave; and the high sheriff having determined on forwarding the case to the Home Department, received a

strong remonstrance on the part of Henry against his farther detention. In this dilemma the wavering Tory hardly knew what to do; but the most fortunate accident released him from the dreadful state of anxiety to which his nervous dread of responsibility had reduced him. The very Minister to whom he was so anxious to refer the case, was actually on a flying visit to a nobleman in the county, to whom, *sans cérémonie*, he forthwith proceeded, having Henry in his carriage, and the statement in his pocket. Having made business known, the case was considered, and the minister in question having forwarded the papers express to London, his Majesty's free pardon arrived at the gaol, and in less than six-and-thirty hours Henry was once more at liberty.

It is impossible in writing, whatever it may be in reading, this narrative, not to reflect with horror upon the inevitable uncertainties of the criminal law. There is, perhaps, no country where justice is more leniently, more equitably administered, than in England: but when it is recollected, that ~~the~~ facts I have here narrated, are in substance, *literally true*—that for

obvious reasons I have suppressed some minor details, and in a trifling degree changed others, the responsibility of a Judge becomes awful !

To discover and make provision against all the difficulties of criminal jurisprudence, apparently requires talents and abilities more than human ; and among the evils extant, even in our mild and salutary code, the fact that an innocent man *may be*, and in many cases *must be*, committed to a county gaol, and remain there for months in durance, before he can by the course of law be delivered, ranks in my mind with the foremost. The subject has been, perhaps is, under the consideration of our Government, and in the Home Circuit already is the mischief in a certain degree, and to a certain extent, remedied ; but it strikes me that hitherto it has not met with the attention it deserves. Were the pains and distress which necessarily accompany imprisonment, confined to the object alone, it might be alleged that in all cases of committal, sufficient evidence of criminality is adduced, on the score of general bad character, to lessen the regret felt for the person committed. But we should look to those innocent sufferers dependent upon the

suspected prisoner. By his protracted absence from his shop, from his farm, from his labour, or his trade, those who look up to him for support and sustenance, are plunged into the greatest misery, and not unfrequently driven by want, to swell the catalogue of criminals, in which the name of their parent or protector has been in the first instance wrongfully inscribed.

My poor hero, strange to say, so qualified by circumstances was his liberation, felt less ecstasy, less bounding joy at his release, than might have been expected. He enquired of the high sheriff whether Sir Harry Lavington had quitted Bury, and then learned the news not only of his departure, but of his elevation to the Peerage.

No sooner had Merton reached the Angel Inn, than he proceeded to make arrangements for despatching a messenger to Wilmore at the Parsonage, having first ascertained that his protectress, Mrs. Harland, had been released from the short detention she suffered on his account, and forwarded to her a consolatory message, and an accompanying remembrance for her trouble. The person who carried

this despatch to her, was the bearer of his warm and friendly note to Mr. Wilmore, to whom, with as little egotism as might be expected under the circumstances, he expressed his misery at the impression which he feared his sister-in-law had taken from his abrupt appearance and unfortunate disclosure of the hidden fact of Kate's dishonour to her father, imploring him to intercede with his wife to alter her opinion, and permit him to pay the last mark of respect to the remains of her exemplary and departed father.

Whether Wilmore upon the receipt of the letter acted upon his own feelings, or, as is more probable, took council from Eliza, I cannot say. Certain it was, that she had received a blow from Merton, from which she had declared she never could sufficiently recover to encounter him again; and I am quite sure, with such a preconceived dislike to the man, his offer of attending the remains of a connexion, of whom while living he never took the slightest notice, was likely to irritate rather than allay any angry feeling existing in her bosom. How this was I am unable exactly to inform my reader, but in reply to the cordial

and anxious application of Henry to be permitted by every act of attention to heal the wound he had so unintentionally inflicted, and mark his respect for the deceased, he received a cold note from Mr. Wilmore, who presented his compliments to Mr. Merton and felt highly honoured by his letter just received; that neither the melancholy circumstances in which he was placed, nor the health of Mrs. Wilmore, admitted the possibility of their receiving visitors of any sort; and that with respect to Mr. Merton's intention of staying for Mr. Etherington's funeral, it was proposed to confine the attendance strictly to the members of his own family, with the exception of the medical attendants, and two gentlemen who, though not connexions of his, had through his past life uniformly shewn him every respect and attention.

This was as decided a *cut* as ever was given, and would have caused Henry no care whatever, had he not felt, trifling as the affront (for affront it must be considered) literally was, in itself, that he had brought it upon himself by having rudely and unceremoniously intruded upon a family with whom he had no previous

acquaintance, merely to bring distress into its circle, and establish himself as a sort of bug-bear in the memory of all its members.

To stay where he was, was now useless. Whither should he go? Had circumstances conspired that way, an immediate excursion to Paris would have been undertaken; in the present state of his affairs this he could not compass; and, therefore, limiting himself for the present to a return to the metropolis, he left the scene of all his later sorrows and celebrity, and reached the well-known door of Steevens's the following afternoon.

CHAPTER XVI.

Love that is but slightly grounded,
Separation soon may cure ;
'Tis a dream, on fancy founded,
Wanting substance to endure !

True affection lasts the longer
When its brightest hours are o'er ;
Parting sorrows bind it stronger,—
Memory but endears it more.

Dearest, then, the tender sorrow,
Teaching passion to endure ;
Which can strength from memory borrow,
Loves—yet never hopes a cure !

WHILE all the affairs which I have recorded were going on in England, much was doing in which Henry was deeply interested, in France. Numerous and powerful were the attacks made upon the wearied heart of Fanny, who, ignorant as she was of the abandonment of the Northern colonization, and of her lover's last great danger, felt that the failure of his cause

against Sir Harry Lavington, interposed a most serious, and apparently insurmountable barrier between himself and her, and the fulfilment of their most anxious wishes.

With her mind full of painful solicitude upon this very important point, harassed by the continual *inuendos* and observations of her mother, galled by the daily sight of the depraved woman who had stolen her Harry in the first instance—(for Mrs. Merton was living in great splendour in Paris with her young Count;) and tortured into a perfect sense of her own misery, by perpetually beholding the happiness of her bosom-friend Miss Neville, now Mrs. Wilson, who enjoyed in the society of her “George,” as she called him, a life of enviable felicity, my unhappy Fanny began to sink under the weight of her contending feelings.

She began to reason upon her uncomfortable state, and therefore I am apprehensive her *love* began to cool: not that she could ever be induced to give up Henry for another; but she began to think that it would be better to relinquish all hope of a happy termination to *their* loves, and abandoning the delusion upon which she had now so

long subsisted, devote herself to a life of solitude and sorrow, as she had professed it her intention to do, in the first letter she wrote to Merton after his marriage.

Mrs. Meadows had found in the son of her old friend the departed button-maker, what she (aristocratic as her notions were,) thought would be an excellent match for Fanny. He was wealthy beyond calculation, good-looking, and good-natured; and by the description of his character and disposition, as given by Mrs. Mouldandshanks his mother, every thing a woman could possibly desire in a husband.

Many with hearts as firm as Fanny's have yielded to a combination of adverse circumstances such as those, which assailed her at the present moment. The incessant *twittings*—'tis a bad word, but all my readers will understand it—the innumerable little rubs which she was doomed to endure, when by her manner and conduct she evinced her distaste, not only for young Mouldandshanks, but for any thing in the shape of a lover—the gaiety around her, while her heart was aching—the continual effort to suppress her sorrow and dress her countenance in smiles,

were all wearing down her constitution, and trying both her health and temper. None but those who have suffered the pang of struggling with strong feeling, seeming happy while the heart is breaking, and forcing the spirits into something like companionable gaiety, can duly appreciate the poor girl's situation.

But when, coloured according to her mother's fancy, she heard the news of Merton's trial for murder, unaccompanied by the sequel of Lavington's appearance alive, it was with difficulty she supported herself; all deceit, all deception was then vain: her agitation was terrible; and, left as she was, in an uncertainty as to the result of the affair, the consequences of the shock were so alarming, that a violent fever attacked her, and for several days her life was in actual danger.

Henry had, during this interval, written to Mrs. Merton, giving a succinct detail of all the circumstances; but this letter the careful mother abstained from mentioning to her daughter, grounding her concealment of the receipt of it upon an order given by the physicians that nothing of an agitating nature should be com-

municated to their patient—for the French doctors saw, with a glance of the eye, that her disorder was one of the heart, and knew that they could not “minister to a mind diseased;” and therefore contented themselves by a *negative* practice, and an injunction that nothing might be suffered to disturb her repose.

When my reader understands that Henry felt it his duty, in making the communication in question, to mention the abandonment of the Melville Island establishment, (the ill-success of his trial with Lavington being already notorious) and the original smallness of his income being known to Mrs. Meadows, he will not, perhaps, be much surprised at her suppression of his letter, which was calculated to excite her daughter’s pity, and pity, as every body knows, is “akin to love;” but when I mention the following circumstances, in addition to those already noticed, he will in all probability feel no surprise at all.

Upon Henry’s return to London from Suffolk, and upon enquiring at his banker’s, having been gratified by hearing that the forged ten-pound note, which he was charged with issuing, had

been traced to one of the political diners at the inn at Lowestoffe, whose note having been accidentally exchanged by the landlord with Henry's, was actually despatched to pay the bill at Yarmouth, he proceeded to his lawyer's. Mr. Templeman was not at home. He called the next day, and the next—still, not at home. After three or four ineffectual visits, the oak always sported, and not a clerk—not a porter even, left at his office, (which was in chambers), Henry was a good deal annoyed, and was proceeding to make a violent noise at the outer door, to rouse the, perhaps, slumbering inhabitants, when a gentleman, whose chambers were on the same staircase, and opposite to Mr. Templeman's, very kindly informed him “that his assault and battery upon the portal were useless, inasmuch as Mr. Templeman had left that.”

“Indeed, Sir!—And pray,” said Henry, “when do you think he will return?”

“That I suspect, nobody can presume to guess,” replied the stranger.

“Gone into the country, I conclude?” said Henry.

"Out of it, I rather think," answered the stranger.

"Oh,—to spend a few weeks in France?" said Henry, at the moment congratulating himself, that something like business would form an excuse for a trip to Paris.

"No—it is generally thought he has taken a trip to America—at least so the advertisements say?" said the stranger.

"Advertisements!—how d'you mean, Sir?" said Merton.

"Oh! you don't know the history?"

"Not I."

"I beg your pardon," said the stranger; "perhaps you are a client?"

"I am."

"That is strange, and not have heard of his absconding with a large sum of Lord Rutherford's money!"

"He was Lord Rutherford's agent, and ——"

"Oh yes; I see you know something, but not all: he is off, Sir, with more than sixty thousand pounds, they say."

"Has his Lordship taken any steps for——?"

"All of no use, Sir: he is gone, and left many a man to rue the day."

“ Good God ! how very surprising ! ” said Merton. “ I am extremely obliged to you, Sir, for your information. Good morning, Sir, I thank you, Sir. ”

“ Good morning, Sir, you are extremely welcome, ” said the stranger : “ pray don’t mention it, ” &c. &c. And so the affair ended, and Merton, with his benevolent heart, went roaming back to Steevens’s across Lincoln’s-Inn-Fields, looking up at the clouds, and marvelling at the deceptive appearances of mankind ; pitying poor Mrs. Templeman, and wondering what could have induced her unhappy husband to commit such a nefarious crime.

Upon his arrival at his hotel, he found a letter from the tailor, who (as I before mentioned,) was building a beautiful cottage-ornée upon my hero’s paternal property, in reply to a demand which Henry, being rather short of cash, had made upon him, for a quarter’s rent, then due some month, or so. The contents of the tailor’s answer were as follows :—

“ SIR,

“ I received your letter of yesterday, demanding payment of a quarter’s rent for your

land, which surprised me very much; as when I concluded the purchase of the property with Mr. Templeman, I paid up the arrear of rent which he ought to have mentioned to you, but which, in the hurry of his departure, he I conclude failed to do. I have, however, his receipt for the amount,

And remain,

Your obedient servant,

JAMES GOSLING."

"Purchase!—What purchase?"—Henry was amazed; nor could he clearly understand the business in its true acceptation, until Mr. Gosling's attorney was kind enough to make it evident to him, and explain, that Mr. Templeman having got Henry, for fear of accidents, to assign his property over to him, previously to the trial, had during *his* difficulties and confinement, and previously to his own escape from England, sold to Mr. Gosling—the tenant who was most eager to purchase it—that snug and compact little freehold, with the proceeds of which, Henry ultimately meant to pay off his debt to the money lender, and which, though a

trifle in itself, was enough to ruin him, and stared him in the face night and day, like a hideous and gigantic vision, threatening in time to overwhelm him.

This was, indeed, a severe blow, and so unexpected too. Whether the first suggestion which Templeman made, of assigning the property, formed part of the plan to get the estate into his own hands, or whether, having the assignment, it was too great a temptation to be *resisted*, in the hour of flight and embarrassment, Henry could not determine. Whatever might have been the cause, the effect was, alas! too visible; and all that Henry had left in the world, when he went into gaol, he had lost during his residence within its walls.

This last remnant of his property gone—himself heart-broken and wretched, was it astonishing that Mrs. Meadows should have abstained from communicating the detail of his misfortunes to her daughter? I think not: however, justice must be done to all parties. She took the earliest opportunity, consistent with the safety of her child, to announce her lover's acquittal from the dreadful charge which

had been made against him, and thus lightened poor Fanny's heart of a heavy load.

She was doomed, however, to more grief and vexation; she was doomed to know, very shortly, the real state of his finances, and the demolition of those hopes which they once had so fondly entertained under curious and painful circumstances. Mrs. Merton—the obstacle to their union, of all others the most serious—in the midst of her heartless and unprincipled career, had committed the crime which her wretched husband had so recently and so narrowly escaped. Detected at Frescati, whither she had gone with young Leavingstake, in cheating at rouge-et-noir, she was expelled the salon without any ceremony. The Count felt his honour implicated, and threatened to abandon her to her fate. Her high spirit could not brook the discovery of her meanness, and in the morning, anxious to save herself the mortification of being discarded, she fled from the lodgings which the Count and she occupied in the Rue de la Paix, and when he arose, he found, instead of his smiling enchantress waiting to receive him at breakfast, this note :—

“It is in vain to seek, or enquire after me. The only favour I condescend to ask, is, that from this moment you will forget me. When this reaches you, all will be over with me. Leave Paris—you may else be involved in some difficulty on my account.—Adieu.

KATE ETHERINGTON.”

(For thus she signed herself.)

Astonishment and dismay seized the Count, for though he had fulminated his determination to withdraw his protection from her, before the company, at Frescati, he was too much her captive to do any such thing in reality. He raved, and swore and stormed, like a madman; flew first to the Police, then to the English Ambassador's; then skirred the town in hopes of meeting her; overhauled all the books of the diligences in the Messageries Royales; sent forth half-a-dozen emissaries in as many directions: but all in vain—no news could be procured of the fair fugitive, until some four or five days after, when, on the banks of the Seine, between Paris and St. Cloud, in an unfrequented spot, were found the bonnet and

shawl of the unhappy woman. To the former was pinned a note, written in pencil, part of which had been obliterated by the dews, or rains; apparently expressive of the writer's forgiveness of all her enemies; signed with the letters K. E.

Upon the receipt of this intelligence, Count Leavingstake departed from Paris, bearing with him as a relic, the shawl of his beloved Kate, which he kissed a thousand times, reproaching himself, at least ten times as often, for having, by his indiscreet exposure of her, at the gambling-table, driven her to the commission of that dreadful act, by which she had destroyed herself here and hereafter, and moreover deprived him, of the pleasure of her agreeable society.

Far different was the effect produced upon Fanny: once again did she behold a gleam of light breaking in upon her—a new hope dawned. Her mother, apprehending no danger from Merton, in his present situation, and certainly not anticipating the sudden removal from this transitory life, of his lady, had not communicated the whole of his letter to her daughter.

All Fanny's hopes were not quite extinguished, and when this circumstance took place, they were, as I have just said, re-kindled to a certain extent. At all events, she calculated upon seeing her Henry at this juncture; for, since any shew of grief for the very equivocal loss he had just sustained, would be little better than hypocrisy, she saw nothing which could reasonably interfere with his immediately visiting them in Paris.

Little did the unfortunate girl imagine what was transacting in London, at this period; little did she picture to herself the real situation of her beloved Henry. He could not go to her; no, not if she had called on him even in the voice of distress. He might hear—he might pity—he might weep—he might die; but no power of his own, could remove him from the third floor of the King's Bench Prison, in a small room of which, he had been, some days previously to his wife's death, securely lodged by several creditors of that said wife; who, hearing from the tailor in the country, that he was selling off, thought they might as well lay hold of him, while he yet had some-

thing left, wherewithal to satisfy their demands upon his eccentric lady, which, conjointly, be it understood, amounted to some seven or eight thousand pounds.

Henry of course could do nothing under his circumstances, but go to prison. Any evasive delays which the law might, during the long vacation, have afforded him, were *but* delays; and he resolved at once to submit to the confinement, whence he was advised to release himself in due time, under that benevolent Act (which like all other excellent measures, is liable to abuse,) for the relief of Insolvent Debtors. Richer, greater, better men, perhaps, than he, had submitted to the bleaching operation of the law, and he accordingly gave the accustomed notice to that effect. It was this document, printed and published in the London Gazette, (which Mrs. Mouldandshanks borrowed regularly from a Commis attached to the Embassy,) that first gave to his devoted Fanny the intelligence of his incarceration. When she saw, without understanding the meaning of the advertisement, she doubted whether she should communicate it to her mother; but

these very doubts betrayed her. An involuntary exclamation escaped her; and when Mrs. Meadows hastily snatched the Gazette from her daughter's hand, to ascertain the cause of her agitation, a tear, just dropped upon the paper, pointed out the dreadful annunciation which had excited her terror and her grief.

Now was the measure of her woe complete: there was no detail—no explanation—no qualification of the circumstances—no excuse, nothing to palliate or soothe. Merton was in gaol for debt, in a week or two after having been released from gaol, upon a charge of murder! and, such is the nature of man—and woman too,—that the very accusation of crime, without the proof of it, rests upon the mind, and is ever after associated with the name of the party accused, as crime itself.

“That’s a pleasant thing, indeed, my love,” said Mrs. Meadows. “You see how foolish all hasty attachments are, my dear; and how appearances may deceive. Suppose *you had* married this man instead of Miss Etherington ——”

“This never would have happened to him,”

said Fanny. "Had he possessed a woman who really loved him, and whom he really loved; who would have made his home happy, and have kept him within the range of his own domestic comforts, he never ——"

"Stuff! my dear Fanny,—nonsense, child!—Do you imagine that you, a poor little simple know-nothing body, could have given a tone to the character of a man like Merton? No, no; you cannot be so vain as that: and certainly, when we look back, first to the elopement, which I never can forgive—then to his conduct with that——What did he call her?—Mrs. Burke, in the park; then the tipsy story, which I found out by accident—then his neglect of you, and his marrying Miss Etherington; what can one think? all these actions mark his disposition; and if these do not, his abandoning his wife, and coming down to us, was ——"

"My dear mother," interrupted Fanny, "you did not certainly feel the violent impropriety of his visit to Southampton; for I never saw you so warm or cordial to him, since we have known him, as you were then."

"I tell you, child," said the animated mother, "I like the man—extremely."

"And yet you blame *me* for liking him extremely," said Fanny.

"I don't blame you for liking an agreeable person; but I blame you for persisting in the nourishment of a passion, the hopes of which never can be realized."

"For mercy's sake, let us change the subject," said the poor girl: "he is wretched enough now, and so am I; and talking, I am afraid, will never alter *my* feelings, nor *his* circumstances. However, my dearest mother, I am not deaf to reason; I am not blind to conviction.—Under the present circumstances, any discussion of the subject is useless—needless: promise never to force me, into the consideration of any other similar topic, and I ——"

Here a rap at the doors of the salon, announced the arrival of Tom Mouldandshanks, who thus inopportunately arrived, to escort the ladies to the Luxembourg.

"There, there, dry your eyes, Fanny," said her mother: "you look extremely hideous; and pray, now, let me have no gloom—no nonsense."

Poor Fanny! with her heart throbbing, and her head aching, was forced to accept the arm of her new and ardent admirer, whose unmoving assiduities became doubly disagreeable, from the inaptitude of the time at which he had chosen to offer them.

But what were poor Henry's feelings, when, in a letter which Wilson wrote to him, at the solicitation of his wife, specially moved thereunto by her friend Miss Frances Meadows, he received the intelligence of the death of Kate. He, who saw the extent of his difficulties—who knew how they had accumulated, and moreover, saw the certainty of extrication from them—saw now no obstacle to his marriage. His wife was actually dead; and if he could but throw himself at Fanny's feet, plead with her mother the ten thousand sufferings he had undergone; the sincerity of his feelings, his devotion, his readiness to adopt every honourable mode of increasing his means, he anticipated perfect success. But this anticipation presented itself to his sanguine mind at a moment when he could not possibly approach the object of his affections; and when, as he

found she was exposed to the assiduities of a rival, his absence might be attended with effects of more than negative evil.

It was at this point of his history, that Henry met with the most unexpected and mysterious aid. Reduced literally to his last shilling, and *that*, procured only by the sacrifice of some useless ornaments, he was surprised at receiving a bank note of fifty pounds, in an envelope, accompanied by these extraordinary words:—

“Take the enclosed—use it during your confinement. When it is gone, another shall succeed it, if the slightest hint on the subject, addressed to A. B. appears in the Courier newspaper. Much more is your due than the writer of this, can ever furnish you with—maintain your spirits; but keep this communication secret. ‘*Le bon temps viendra.*’”

Le bon temps viendra!—how often did Henry repeat these words—a thousand times more valuable were they, than the supply of money which he had received. However, the whole

tenor of the note was extraordinary—he had a right to more than his correspondent could furnish him with. That he had a right to any thing, was pleasing intelligence. Might he not announce this new vision to the Meadowses?—No; he was bound to secrecy. It appeared a condition of the loan, or gift, or whatever it might be considered. He was puzzled—but there was a dawn of light; and so buoyant were his spirits, so animated his hopes, that when he went to bed, after an hour or two of splendid castle-building, he fell into a more profound slumber than he had enjoyed since his residence in this strong hold of the law.

Had Henry's mind been more at ease than it was, before he received this most seasonable supply, the scene and characters around him would have afforded him much matter for amusing speculation. When he looked from his window, he saw amongst the crowd in the area of the prison, faces which he had seen in the pit of the opera, a few weeks before; and actually detected one man, who had taken an affectionate leave of him, previous

to his departure for the West Indies, where he had said his property was in great confusion, and required his personal attention, in the fact of knocking the balls about, equipped in a flannel jacket, evidently an adept in the game of fives, and by no means a recent "arrival."

I seldom stop to moralize—my readers must always draw their own conclusions; I merely go on with my narrative; but if I ever did indulge in a reflection or two, the sight of this place would mightily provoke me. That losses in trade, inevitable misfortunes, carelessness, inattention, or decided folly, tend greatly to increase the number of its inhabitants, no just observer of human life can deny; but when I see the innumerable candidates for the honour of a residence within its walls or neighbourhood, who throng our streets, and systematically involve themselves in debt, and difficulty, without a chance of redemption, I lift up my eyes and marvel!

The man who wantonly and wilfully runs in debt, must do so, with his eyes open to one of two things—his own ruin and distress, or the

ruin and distress of the confiding tradesman who gives him credit. The wretched nervousness of a life of pecuniary embarrassment, more than outweighs the unfair enjoyment of unjustifiable luxuries. Would an Alderman relish his turtle, if he were forced to eat it, sitting on the tight-rope?—Answer me that question, and I will tell you the sort of splendid misery which that man enjoys, who spends double his income, and is indebted to his goldsmith, his tailor, and his coachmaker, not for his dishes, his clothes and his carriages only, but even for the privilege of using them at liberty.

The Spartans made their Helots drunk, they say, to disgust their children. English fathers, in these days of refinement, might, upon the same principle, shew their sons the interior of the King's Bench prison.

But somewhat too much of this. I should observe, that the tide, which had often ebbed unnaturally with poor Henry, seemed considerably affected by a sudden reflux, just at this period; for Wilson, who wrote, as I before said, to my hero, had chanced, upon a trifling arrangement of a

tavern dinner-bill, or some such matter, many months before, to be Henry's debtor some six or seven guineas. Anxious to pay his debt, but more anxious not to appear to do it at this moment, when Merton's pecuniary difficulties had been made apparent : he desired his *homme d'affaires* in London, to purchase a whole ticket in the then approaching lottery, and enclose one half to my hero, and the other half to himself in Paris. By this little *ruse* he thought he might with delicacy give Henry, in lieu of his debt, that, which in real marketable value was worth more than the amount of his debt, and which, if he were not too suspicious of his luck, he might keep until time and fortune should have decided upon its eventual worth.

This little *cadeau*, Henry received as it was meant ; and knowing by the provisions of the act under which his liberation was to be effected, that this property, like all other property he might possess in the world, would belong to his creditors, he inserted it in his schedule, and acknowledging Wilson's kindness prayed fervently that it might turn out a prize of sufficient value to discharge his debts,

or rather those of his wife, in full. Having recounted all this history to his dear Lady, Mr. George Wilson presented her, with the other half of our hero's ticket, and received such an acknowledgment for this little act of *galanterie*, as tender brides are apt to bestow upon devoted and attentive husbands.

With respect to poor Henry, although certes some few glimmerings of sunshine have broken across the darkness of his fate, still we must not be too sanguine. The main and really important incident which had occurred to him, was the receipt of the mysterious anonymous letter; this, connecting itself as it certainly did, with the hints of his late father, as to something strange and hidden in his history, and also with the resources which he ought to enjoy, became a most interesting document; and when Henry reflected upon the constant exposure of his beloved, to the assidivities of Mr. Mouldandshanks and the gaieties of the French capital, calculated as they are, to enliven and unsentimentalize the mind, he still resorted to the letter, as the great object of future hope and hidden promise. His wife was gone;

and though he was suffering in his person for her follies and vices, he still anticipated, and repeated with his nameless correspondent—

“LE BON TEMPS VIENDRA!”

CHAPTER XVII.

“ Cease your dunning,
Sergeant Running-
Ton, shall settle all my debts.”

WHILE things wore this aspect, little could be expected to arise of importance to Henry, provided his Fanny remained true ; but to be candid, there was a difficulty here ; for, as I have before hinted, the annoyances she suffered, and the worries she had to contend with, bore her spirits down, and made her unlike her former self—but more of this hereafter.

The period, however, arrived, when Henry was to present himself in the Insolvent Debtors' Court, to emancipate himself from prison ; and never, certainly, did man excite more pity and less remark than he. He went from the bar,

as the chief Commissioner said, uncontaminated and untainted; and found himself once more at liberty in the streets of London, without five shillings in the world, and with no resource but his mysterious friend A. B.—not in the new road, but in the Courier, to whom he felt no disposition to apply.

Of course, Paris was the place to which he longed to betake himself, and assuredly he would most speedily have deposited himself in one of the diligences, which start from Piccadilly, and convey their unhappy inmates to the French metropolis in two or three days, at an easy expence, had he not read, with a certain degree of wonder and delight, the following advertisement in the newspapers:—

“ If the Son and Heir of the late James Merton, of Alford Cottage, in the County of Surrey, Esq. will apply to Messrs. Hammond and Daly, Lincoln’s-Inn New-square, matters will be communicated to him of the greatest importance.”

How Henry’s eyes sparkled at the words; how they gladdened his heart. Here it was—here

was the explanation of all the mystery about his father's will—here was the *denouement* of all his difficulties. He had anticipated a change of fortune, by the improving complexion of his minor affairs; and elated, and almost happy, he bounded down to Messrs. Hammond and Daly, where he discovered at once, to his delight and astonishment, that Lord Mildenhall, just deceased, had bequeathed him all the unentailed property of which he was possessed, amounting, certainly to seven thousand pounds per annum, but in all probability to more than ten.

What the motive to an action so very extraordinary could be, Henry in vain laboured to understand. The solicitors were equally in the dark; they stated the fact, shewed him a copy of the will, and assuredly he, of all persons in the world, would be the last to doubt the correctness which they were so desirous to prove. As for Henry personally, he had never seen Lord Mildenhall, never had known him, never heard him spoken of, and certainly would not have been more surprised to find himself the executor of Napoleon Buonaparte, than the favoured legatee of his late Lordship.

So it was ; and such a transition never sure did mortal man experience ! No sooner did he hint to Messrs. Hammond and Daly, that he should wish immediately to start for Paris, but that his funds were inadequate to the charges of such an expedition, than they instantly volunteered being his bankers ; any sum he might require, any accommodation they could afford, were at his command. Should they do *this*, should they manage *that* ?—They were on the *qui vive* to oblige their anticipated client ; and Henry having mentioned the elopement of his late attorney, Mr. Hammond affected hardly to know him ; treated his memory without respect, and obtained my hero's business, by his well-timed liberality, for which I, who know the world, knew of course he meant to repay himself and partner hereafter.

In three days, a thumping brown japanned tin box was hoisted up to a shelf in the office, painted whereon in white letters, nearly as long as Mrs. Burton Danvers's name on her opera box-door, appeared HENRY MERTON, Esq. all capitals, and three smaller brown japanned boxes bearing sundry inscriptions, such as " H. M. Bagglesford Estate"—" H. M., Esq.

Grand Trunk Shares, Regent's Canal, Copper-Mines," and "H. M., Esq. Slaughford—Insurance Co. &c."—all of which blazed away in the eyes of the newly-enriched hero, with a beauty and splendour quite captivating and intoxicating.

Henry left London for Paris in two days. How? in a diligence, with three fat women, two sick children, a pug-dog, and a parrot? in a hack-chaise, jingling and rattling, in the very last stage of tenacity? No: in a travelling carriage of his own—two servants behind, four horses before; the new establishment all in the deepest mourning, himself hat-banded up to the crown, looking as happy in the emblems of sadness, as an old man's young widow with a jointure of five thousand a-year.

Here, then, was my poor hero—all the luck turned; grief into joy, sorrow into happiness: all was life, and light, and liberty. Fanny was his own; joy, comfort, domestic bliss, rational pleasure, perfect competence, every thing in short he could desire was within his reach, and he bore with gratitude, but not with philosophy, the wonderful change in his affairs, the effects

of which were not more marvellous than the cause.

The surprise, the astonishment, the joy and the confusion which my hero's appearance made in the Rue de la Paix, may be better imagined than expressed. He had taken on his carriage, from Calais, and despatched one of his servants as an *avant courier* to secure horses; this man was the bearer of a letter to Wilson, and reached the French Metropolis some hours before his master. The letter, the intelligence it contained, completely overcame poor dear Fanny, and sent her to bed in hysterics, leaving Mr. Tom Mouldandshanks considerably below par, in a *tête-à-tête* with her amiable mother.

In a short time arrived the hero of my tale. I need not say how he was received by Mrs. Meadows. He was always charming, and never wanted any thing, except five or six thousand a-year to make him the very paragon of perfection. Here he was, adorned with all the advantages wealth could give him, and *mirabile dictu*, into his open and extended arms did the overjoyed mother throw her beautiful, bewitching, and half-fainting child.

This *was* pleasure—this *was* ecstasy : here were the griefs of years repaid ! One such moment was worth an empire ! When the raptures of the principal performers had somewhat subsided, the cares and kindnesses of the Wilsons came in, so sweetly and soothingly, that an oblivion to all past sorrows was moved and adopted, and the deepest mourning ordered for Mrs. and Miss Meadows, who felt it quite correct, under the circumstances, to shew their respect for the memory of my Lord Mildenhall, the founder of their fortunes.

Henry having thus triumphantly established himself, proposed returning to England—a measure, in which his intended mother-in-law most cordially joined ; her pledges to the Mould-andshankses had gone so far, with respect to Fanny, that she felt the sooner she was away from them the better. The Wilsons had got tired of the racket of Paris, and longed for a little domestic quiet, and accordingly it was agreed that they should all start for Dieppe, and so proceed to London, *viâ* Brighton, instead of going by Calais and Dover ; thus affording Mrs. Wilson an opportunity of seeing part of Normandy on one side of the water, and her

own family on the other, without putting themselves in the least out of the way.

"Aren't you grown taller, my dear Henry?" said Mrs. Meadows, looking at Merton through the glass.

"Not that I am aware of," said Henry.

"Your figure is vastly improved—how much clearer and more healthy you look than you did!" said the flattering mother-in-law.

"My health has been pretty good considering," said my hero.

"Fanny, my life," continued the exemplary parent, "What has he done to his teeth? how much whiter they look than they did!"

"I see no difference," said Fanny, artlessly or, perhaps, mischievously. She was aware, as I am now, that the improvement in his figure, the freshness of his complexion, and the beauty of his teeth, had their origin neither in health, nor time, climate, nor constitution, but in the increased seven or eight thousand pounds per annum, which, like varnish on a picture, had brought out all the perfections of Mr. Henry Merton to his mother-in-law's scrutinizing eye.

Henry staid in Paris merely just to traverse

the Tuileries, the magnificent Louvre, the public gardens, and public buildings; and in three days after his arrival the joyous party set off on their return to England highly delighted, some with their *sejour* in France, others with the prospect before them at home, but all feeling, from whatever source it might arise, happiness, pure, undisturbed and unqualified.

To describe the journey, or the passage, would be to imply an ignorance on the part of my readers with which I should fear to charge them. Everybody now knows his Paris and France generally, as well as he does his alphabet and his multiplication-table; therefore, suffice it to say, that in a fine August afternoon the happy party landed at Brighton under a heavy fire of telescopes, spy-glasses, and eye-glasses, which lined the cliff and windows thereunto adjacent, and were occupied with the 'eyes of that class of persons whose tastes take them in the summer to a place where there is neither shade nor country, and which is an admirable retreat in the winter, not only because it is warmer than London, but because, from the total absence of trees, one is never annoyed by the fall of the leaf. The splen-

did combination of salt-water and sunshine will make any place gay in the coldest weather; and to these reasons, and one more important still, may be attributed the popularity of the nearest watering-place to the Metropolis in that season, when London presents nothing but an atmosphere of the colour and consistency of pea-soup, oceans of mud, and clouds of smoke.

No time was lost in finding the residence of Mrs. Neville, who received the party with the greatest warmth and cordiality. Every accommodation was afforded them which her house contained; beds at the New Steyne were engaged, a late dinner ordered, harmony, joy and domestic comfort were the order of the day, and Henry for once, and at last, found himself truly happy.

Wonders, however, like evils, seldom come alone; and a circumstance had occurred that morning, extraordinary and surprising in every point of view. My readers have not, I conclude, forgotten that poor Mary Graham, the victim of John Felton of Haversfield, junior, Esq. had taken up her residence with the Nevilles. Her delight at seeing the Meadowses was great, but their surprise was fully as great as her pleasure could have been, when they

heard that old Mr. Felton was dead, and had bequeathed her fifteen thousand pounds!

This intelligence it seems was brought to her, with a cheque for the money, by the young attorney at Haversfield, whose affection for Miss Graham in earlier life I have already noticed. It was evident that he had had a very principal share in the contrivance of the legacy, and that by bringing the news and the money himself to Mary he had hoped to reap the fruits of his activity and influence. He was sincerely attached to the girl, and in all probability, had she not formed the romantic attachment which was her ruin, she would long ago have been his wife. Why, then, will it be asked, did she now accept the legacy and refuse the lawyer? He was a well-looking, and (except in the way of business) an honest, honourable young man; he had, as the saying goes, "feathered his nest;" he had besides some more clients in the country, whose wills he expected to make; he had all these prospects—a business worth some seven or eight hundred pounds per annum—a pretty house, and kept his horse and chaise. "What hidden cause, yet unexplored," could, I say, have in-

duced Miss Mary Graham to reject his offer? Guess, reader, guess till you are tired, and you will, in all probability, never hit the real reason of her refusal. It must be told; and as it is creditable to both parties, I see no harm in telling it now—her heart and hand were not hers to give. The evening before the arrival of the man and his money, she had accepted an offer of marriage, from Major Rushbrook, the discarded lover of Fanny Meadows.

Mark this fact, and remember hereafter what a forcible illustration it is of my proverb. It is true, the same unsophisticated innocence which kept her silent when her admission into Mrs. Neville's family was under discussion, sealed her lips when the Major threw himself at her feet and confessed himself her willing slave for life. Never was man more perfectly happy than the Major, when the consenting sigh of the blushing girl announced her reciprocity of feeling; so that, adding this couple to the rest of the assembled party on the Marine Parade, perhaps we may say so much joy never was divided amongst the same number of persons before, nor, perhaps, since.

But of all joy, who felt such joy as Henry?

His was, indeed, rapture. It seemed as if all his woes were to be recompensed to him at once: all difficulties were now smoothed—all perplexities were now unravelled; and really, as if by “providential interference,” he was at once, almost marvellously put into possession of wealth, beauty, and happiness—the apparent author of all these advantages being to him a perfect stranger.

Major Rushbrook, in whom Henry now saw a great many good qualities, and for whom since he had irrevocably renounced Fanny, he really felt a regard, inspired by his extremely pleasant manners, odious to him as they were before, wished very much that Merton would stay and celebrate his nuptials with Mary, for she had become now an object of importance in the circle, not more from being the proposed wife of a very distinguished field-officer, than from the circumstance of her having brought him, as it turned out, a handsome sum of money by way of fortune.

These are the things, these are the changes, and such as these, which first set me upon the scheme of noting down what I see in the world.

The Major never surmised the cause of his lady's wealth ; and having no suspicions, made no enquiries—wherein he shewed his wisdom ; not but that Mrs. Gage of Haversfield was one of those wonders in the world, to whom I have before had occasion to allude in this story.

Henry, however, resolved to dash up to London with his bride elect ; and though nobody but doctors were to be seen in town at that time of the year, still he thought he might shew his skill in horsemanship even to those, and caper and curvet upon his beautiful blood bay, with his aristocratic groom passaging the streets at his heels ; in short, with the wealth came the pretension, with the pretension came the ambition, and my hero, unused to content in adversity, seemed little better calculated to attain to it in prosperity.

The Meadowses and Henry travelled together, and seldom had they journeyed under such very agreeable circumstances ; for, although the young man's mind was a little disturbed by the sudden metamorphosis he had undergone, still there was Fanny, smiling and blushing, and looking happy and angry, and cross and arch, and ten thousand different

ways, as his wit or his waggery, his love or his ambition, betrayed themselves in his words, which flowed with a volubility and animation perfectly unusual with him.

Arrived once more in the Metropolis, the happy party drove to Thomas's in Berkeley-square, where the ladies resolved to remain till the solemnization of the marriage, which my hero, who had been so accustomed to disappointment and misfortune, declared should not be delayed beyond ten days. Mrs. Meadows saw no just cause or impediment why this ardent and earnest request should not be complied with, and accordingly the Thursday week after their arrival, was fixed for the happy day, and all the ceremonies and arrangements were laid down in a programme with the greatest care and perspicuity by the happy bride and bridegroom.

The day after their return to town was passed by the ladies in visits to Madam Maradin and other priestesses of the Temple of Fashion. Henry had been to Lincoln's Inn—all smiles, bows, graces, and attention. Called at Leader's—just spoke about the carriages—joined his

beloved at the hotel—sauntered down to Gray's, looked out a few diamonds, tossed over some amethysts, enquired the price of a pretty set of Turquoises, lounged out again, drove to Rundell's, overhauled patterns of plate, and, above all, himself tendered the delicate third finger of Fanny's left hand to a bunch of rings, fitted it himself, and bought the mystic symbol which was to make her his; so superstitious was he, and so resolved, that nobody should purchase or keep it, except himself.

In such exquisite little fooleries did he consume the day; escorted them to the hotel—mounted his horse—did a little park—dirtied his boots, and splashed an apple-woman at the corner of Grosvenor-street with his curvettings—returned to dress for dinner, and at seven found himself domesticated with his beloved, and her mother, the which he mightily enjoyed, resolving at the same time that no persuasion upon earth should induce him to admit of Mrs. Meadows's residence with them after his marriage. He had seen too much of this sort of thing to suffer its existence under his own roof: being quite sure,

that wherever there is an old counsellor, there is no happiness—either she lends herself as a partisan of the younger woman, or alarmed for her own safety, conjures up evils where they do not in reality exist: and thus in one way or another keeps the *ménage* in a state of uncomfortable irritation, by a system, the existence of which, no man of sense will suffer, and no woman of feeling advocate.

How sparkled the champagne, how passed the merry joke, how smiled the lovely girl, how talked her animated mother on this blissful day who shall tell?—such a meal were worthy of the gods! Scarcely, however, had it ended, when a letter was delivered to Henry by one of his servants; no answer had been required: it came from his new solicitors, Messrs. Hammond and Daly, of Lincoln's-Inn New-square. Its contents ran thus:

.(“ Private.”)

“ Lincoln's-Inn.—Six o'Clock.

“ DEAR SIR,

I have been most disagreeably visited since I had the pleasure of seeing you by Mr.

Sheldwick, of the house of Sheldwick and Worton, who informs me that I have too hastily admitted your claim upon the legacy of our late client Lord Mildenhall. He states, in very distinct terms, that you are not the eldest son of the late Mr. Musgrave, of Alford Cottage, and has indeed produced some very extraordinary documents to prove the fact against us. He has but this morning returned from Ireland, where he has been staying on professional business, which accounts for the delay which has taken place in his proceedings. I should go to you myself, but that I am particularly engaged at dinner at seven, (I send my servant forward with this from Gloucester Place where I dine,) besides which, I apprehended that I might not find you at home, or if at home, disengaged at this time of the day.

“The subject is of great importance, and I confess I do not like the general appearance of the case ; perhaps you will do me the favour to call here at one to-morrow, when I will take care Mr. Sheldwick shall meet you at chambers, and we will proceed with the investigation of his client’s claim, but I think it only

friendly to add, that I have every reason, from the little I have seen, to believe his grounds of opposition very good.

“ Believe me, dear Sir,

“ Your very faithfully

“ CHARLES DALE HAMMOND.”

“ To Henry Merton, Esq.”

A thunderbolt could not have stricken him more forcibly ! He turned pale—then flushed like scarlet. Did any body wait?—No.—Mrs. Meadows enquired if he had heard any thing unpleasant?—He had not courage to tell the truth.—No ; it was a letter from his lawyer—infernal business—they knew he hated business ; and so he parried the enquiries of the ladies—but oh ! how sickening, how tiring, how miserable, was the rest of the evening. It was certainly of no kind of use to tell them this broken bit of bad news, bad only in the apprehension of Mr. Hammond, because Henry knew he *was* the eldest and only son of his late father, therefore whatever other apprehensions Mr. Hammond might have, his fears could not be grounded upon any doubt of that fact.

It was therefore useless agitating the women

—quite absurd alarming their feelings; because there could be no doubt—certainly not. Mr. Hammond was all wrong—at least so Henry determined; and although the letter had certainly the effect of breaking his spirits, and destroying his peace of mind for the moment, it could do no more.

In this fidgety manner the evening passed: coffee came — chasse — candles — bed-time. They parted for the night, and while the unsophisticated Fanny lay thinking first, and dreaming afterwards, about bride-cake, favours, love, and lace, Henry was ruminating upon the new and unexpected evil which had started up in the midst of his joy like a frightful spectre in the middle of a bridal feast.

CHAPTER XVIII.

——“ I find she loves him much, because she hides it :
Love teaches cunning even to innocence ;
And where he gets possession, his first work
Is to dig deep within a heart, and there
Lie hid, and like a miser in the dark
To feast alone.”——

HENRY, as it may easily be imagined, was nervously anxious for the arrival of the hour fixed by Mr. Hammond for his interview with Mr. Sheldwick ; and my reader may pretty well comprehend the sort of feelings by which he was tormented, when he perceived on the breakfast-table, two or three of those delicate little trinket cases, just arrived from Gray's, which delight the eyes and gladden the hearts of blooming brides, and when shortly afterwards Mr. Elmore appeared in the square before the hotel windows, with a pair of tear-away thorough-bred full-blood carriage-horses intended for Fanny's own chariot ; and was, moreover, made to understand that a person

from Leaders had brought patterns of trimmings and drawings of hammer-cloths, and the deuce knows what else, for Miss Meadows's selection and approbation. The sickening apprehension with which every one of these arrivals filled his anxious mind, and the abstracted indifference with which he turned over the pretty specimens of taste submitted to the inspection of the family party, formed a strong contrast to the unqualified gaiety of the preceding day.

Mrs. Meadows saw that something had occurred, and began to feel a doubt as to the reality of Henry's good fortune. She conjured up a thousand little odd circumstances in her imagination, and in less than a couple of hours, was more than half sure that it was a *ruse* of the lover to obtain her consent to his marriage with Fanny. She did not impart the whole of her suspicions to Fanny, and if she had, the innocent girl would have laughed at her fears and ridiculed her suspicions.—Be that as it may, Henry arrived at Mr. Hammond's chambers at half-past twelve.

Mr. Hammond was engaged. Henry waited in an ante-room. Mr. Hammond appeared in

no hurry to admit him. Henry rang the bell; a pale tallow-faced clerk, with greasy black hair and inky fingers, came into the room.

"Did you tell Mr. Hammond I was here," asked Henry.

"Yes, Sir, he is coming directly," said the imp.

And he left the room sulkily, and banged the door somewhat saucily. Immediately, however, returning, no person having quitted Mr. Hammond in the interval, (it thereby being made evident to my hero that no person had been with him,) the clerk said—

"Mr. Hammond will see you now, Mr. Merton."

This English tutoyerization was new to Henry, and augured ill.

He entered the apartment of the head of the house.

"Good morning, Mr. Merton," said Hammond, who was writing a letter, from which he barely raised his eyes to address his visitor, not even motioning to quit his seat, "won't you sit down, Sir? Driver, put a chair."

"I believe," said Henry, when Driver had left the room, "I am pretty punctual."

“ It is just one,” said the lawyer, continuing his letter; “ Mr. Sheldwick will be here immediately, I dare say.”

Henry was a good deal startled at the change of manner so evident in his formerly civil and obsequious companion. He cast his eyes round the room, and in the place where his large brown box had heretofore stood, there was a “ *hiatus, valde deflendus!*”

“ I am afraid, Mr. Merton,” said Hammond, folding up his now finished letter, “ we were somewhat too hasty in our proceedings upon Lord Mildenhall’s legacy.”

“ I was extremely surprised at your letter of last night,” said Henry.

“ I see no hope at all for you. Pray, were you ignorant of the existence of your brother?”

“ Completely. Indeed,” said Henry, “ so entirely ignorant of the fact, that it will require some very strong proofs to induce me to give credence to the story your friend Mr. Sheldwick has raised upon the subject.”

“ As for the fact, Mr. Merton, there is no doubt whatever, for——”

Here the arrival of Mr. Sheldwick put an end to their conversation; and as he entered the

room, Henry instantly recognized him as the stranger who had called upon him, shortly after the death of his father.

“ Mr. Merton, Mr. Sheldwick,” said Hammond.

“ I have seen Mr. Merton before, as I dare say he remembers,” said the new comer, bowing somewhat formally. “ The visit, Mr. Merton, which I paid you after the death of your parent, was connected with the subject under discussion now. The object of that visit was to ascertain whether you were ignorant of the fact which it now becomes my duty to reveal, and which my Lord Mildenhall imagined it probable you might at that period have known. Mr. Hammond, I believe you have furnished Mr. Merton with a copy of his Lordship’s will, upon which he has claimed the noble legacy in question.”

“ I have,” said Hammond.

“ You will shortly perceive,” said Sheldwick, untying a packet of papers, “ that your claim is unfortunately inadmissible, Mr. Merton; from the fact, which I believe has been partly communicated to you, that you are *not* the eldest son of the late Mr. Merton of Alford Cottage, to whom, for every reason in the

world, as I shall immediately shew, my Lord Mildenhall has bequeathed such valuable property; but the second son of your father, and, as you must be conscious, having no claim whatever upon his Lordship, whose name even, I believe to have been, till after his death, unknown to you."

"I admit that, Sir; but——"

"Stay, Mr. Merton, "I should not attempt to set up the claim of your elder brother——"

"If I have an elder brother, I shall admit his claim certainly; but——"

"Not merely because he is your elder brother assuredly," said Sheldwick, "but because as I shall prove——"

"What I mean to say," said Merton, irritated to a certain degree by the pertinacious adherence of the lawyer to the fact of his having an elder brother,—“what I mean to say is, that if it can be proved that I have so near a relation in existence, and am ignorant of it, I shall be quite ready to admit any other allegation or assertion, which you may please to make.”

"I am sure," said Hammond, wishing to soothe, "I am quite sure that Mr. Sheldwick

will advance nothing which he cannot legally support and substantiate."

"Legally, perhaps," muttered my hero.

"The truth is, Mr. Merton, and it is a truth of which I know you to be ignorant, your father was twice married!"

"Twice married!" exclaimed Henry.

"That is the fact," said Sheldwick: "I have all the documents to prove it, the certificate of his former marriage is at this moment in my hand."

"Can it be possible that I should thus long have been kept in ignorance of a fact so important?"

"You *are* aware," said Sheldwick, "for you told me so—that there was a mystery in your family; your father's injunctions were laid upon you, never to press him upon a hidden matter. The fact of his former marriage, and the circumstances connected with it, compose the secret, an allusion to which, he so earnestly prohibited."

"That seems probable, indeed," sighed Henry.

"You may rely on Mr. Sheldwick," said Hammond.

"I, Mr. Hammond," said Sheldwick, "am not the least surprised at Mr. Merton's incre-

dulity. I should, in his circumstances, doubt the possibility of such a concealment in the long intercourse of such a life as was led by his father and himself, into which, from all I have heard, no single dissension crept, and where there appeared to exist nothing but harmony and affection."

"You estimate the excellence of my late parent very justly," said Henry.

"But," continued the lawyer, "the astonishment and wonder will cease, when you are informed that a bond of secrecy, under the weighty penalty of forty thousand pounds, closed your parent's lips upon the subject; and during the life of Lord Mildenhall, the facts which I am now compelled by circumstances to detail to you, never could have been divulged to you by your father, without the danger of incurring that serious forfeiture."

"Good heaven!" exclaimed Henry, "what action had my good father ever committed which possibly could require such secrecy?"

"You shall be satisfied," said Sheldwick, and proceeded—"When your father was about your present age, he became acquainted with Lord Mildenhall's family; his lordship's daughter being at that time seventeen. Cir-

cumstances of a local nature domesticated Mr. Merton very constantly with his Lordship's family; and to those who know the world, it will not appear surprising, where tastes and talents accorded and assimilated as they unfortunately did, in this instance, that a continuous intercourse should have matured the first feelings of friendship into a sentiment equally pure, but somewhat more ardent.

“ I need not repeat the often-made observation, that those most interested in such matters are the last to see the operation of time and circumstances upon the hearts and minds of those with whom they are perpetually and constantly associated. Lord Mildenhall discovered nothing of the progress of your father's attachment for the Lady Anne, nor of that reciprocity of feeling upon *her* part, which was perfectly evident to every casual visitor at the house; and he went on tolerating, nay, apparently encouraging, (from his ignorance of its existence) the tender sentiment which pervaded both their young hearts.

“ There are kind and officious friends in all families—young persons say, officious, without being kind. One such had my Lord Milden-

hall, who undertook the task of opening his Lordship's eyes upon the subject of this growing attachment, which of course he did from the purest possible motives, from a desire to prevent the distressing consequences which he (tenderly alive to the interests of the house of Mildenhall) saw rapidly approaching to a crisis, and not from any envy of your father in his success with the daughter of the peer, who had, be it observed, before this period, carried herself somewhat scornfully and coldly, and suffered more than one suitor to plead in vain, and amongst the number, the specious, plausible, disinterested Mr. Malcolm himself.

"*You* are not, if *I* am," continued Sheldwick, "past the age duly to appreciate the force of love, the power of such a passion at least, as that, which inspired the young couple of whom I am now speaking. Lord Mildenhall did all that a proud lord and a passionate father could do—he discarded Mr. Merton, he banished him from the presence of his daughter, and closed the massive gates of Mildenhall castle, eternally against him !

"There are various modes of treating the same complaint, Mr. Merton," said Sheldwick;

who had riveted the attention of the young man. "Lord Mildenhall chose a desperate remedy, and tried to cut at once the chain which bound two fond hearts together. The very pangs of separation were renewals of affection—the very act of oppression on the part of the parent, aroused the latent spirit of the daughter.

"Merton, as I have said before, was expelled the castle; but, as if this were not enough, and to make assurance doubly sure, the Lady Anne was suddenly and speedily removed to the residence of her aunt, Lady Dunallan, which was situated in South Wales. Here, independently of removing her from the place where your father had left her, and where every object around her, tended to maintain, invigorate, and support her passion,—here, I say, she was to be immured, under the immediate surveillance of an ancient matron, whose purity was Lucretian, and whose sanctity was proverbial.

"Did my Lord Mildenhall think that change of scene, of climate, of society, could exterminate, root out, as it were, from the heart, the one—one deep-buried feeling? Is there any man weak enough to suppose that the fervent, soul-

felt love of woman is to be shaken by such a superficial arrangement? In days of romance, when the Lady Dunallan's spacious castle was inhabited by feudal barons and warlike chiefs, when dungeons were to be found, yawning like graves for living victims, where bound to the massive column or the heavy ring-bolt, the poor suffering virgin might expiate her love and her indiscretion in solitude, in chains, and even in death; this wild scheme, properly aided, might have broken her spirit or her heart; but in the later times of the world, when men live at hotels in London, while mail-coaches roll over even roads, and letters travel in white leathern-bags from Lombard-street, nor towers, nor dungeons, nor distant castles, will check the operation of that master-passion with which the hearts, the minds, the very souls of your father and Lady Anne Burford were so entirely possessed!

“ Shall I confess, that from this solitude, the wretched girl wrote to her beloved, told him the place of her confinement, confessed her longing desire to see him, and renewed in her letter, those vows which she had personally exchanged with him long, long before.

“ I need not say how this letter was received, and replied to. So soon as the conveyance which brought the welcome summons to his eyes could carry him back to Wales, a living answer to her fond appeal, he was in the neighbourhood of Dunallan Castle, secure amongst its fastnesses.

“ The Lady Anne was permitted to indulge her love of solitude, and stroll down the zigzag paths which led to the sea-beach, through the tangled and almost precipitous plantations. Did not her heart tell her, that amidst the deep recesses of that shady dale, she should find her devoted Merton?—Too truly spoke the trembling monitor—there he was !

“ And here,” said Mr. Sheldwick, “ I would fain drop a veil over the remnant of my history ; but the truth, Mr. Merton, must be told. Sometime after the arrival of your father at the place of her residence, the poor young lady was attacked with a fever and illness, which so much alarmed her careful aunt, that an express was sent off to Lord Mildenhall ; a physician was called in, much against the inclination of the suffering patient ; and, I leave you to judge the horror and surprise of the haughty peer,

when, upon his arrival at Dunallan, he discovered that nothing but the marriage of his daughter with her favoured lover, could preserve her reputation, or procure a legitimate heir to the honours of his noble house.

“ He could have borne to see his daughter die at his feet, but to see her living and recovering, only to bring eternal shame and disgrace upon his family, was, I may say, without doing any injustice to his feelings, a more painful spectacle. There was but one step to be taken to avoid the dreaded exposure : the marriage of the lovers was indispensable, and in order the better to conceal the exact period, at which the ceremony took place, it was decided that it should be performed in the neighbourhood of Dunallan Castle. This was accordingly arranged, and here I have the certificate of that marriage, as solemnized by the Reverend Hugh Morgan, witnessed by Watkin Jones, and Llewellyn Evans ”

Mr. Sheldwick here produced the certificate, which, however satisfactory as evidence, was by no means an agreeable document to the eyes of poor Henry.

“ In a certain time after the marriage, which,

though carefully witnessed and registered for reasons you may easily anticipate, was kept profoundly secret, Lady Anne Merton, in giving birth to a son, fell a victim to the agitation and distress of mind she had previously undergone, and died in the nineteenth year of her age.

“The issue of this marriage is, of course, the eldest son of James Merton, of Alford Cottage; here is the register of his baptism at Llpldmprdtln Church; the names of his god-fathers and god-mother being here also recorded, Morgan Lewis, Griffith Howell, and Martha Jones.”

“This is as clear as day,” said Mr. Hammond.

“It may require a little expianation to you, Mr. Merton, who perhaps are unacquainted, however nearly connected with the family of Lord Mildenhall, to shew, why your elder brother does not inherit naturally the title and all the estates of his late Lordship; but the truth is, that Lord Mildenhall, stung to the very heart's core by the event which you have just heard of, discarded his daughter, and contrary to his previously avowed intention,

married again. By this second wife he had a son, and two daughters ; and now I shall shew you why you have been kept in ignorance of these circumstances, till the present period."

" If you please," said Henry ; who, instead of listening with anxiety to the sequel of the history which had destroyed all his hopes of happiness, was lost in speculations, and wonderings how he should get out of the various difficulties, in which his supposed acquisition of fortune had involved him.

* " When," continued Mr. Sheldwick, " Lord Mildenhall, who himself married shortly after the marriage of Lady Anne, saw there was a probability of an increase to his family, his views towards the issue of the ill-fated union were entirely changed ; and shortly after his daughter's death, which was as little talked of as possible, and announced as if she had died at Dunallan, and died unmarried—a deception in which old Lady Dunallan prevailed upon your father to acquiesce, ' for his Anne's sake,'—his Lordship agreed to make handsome provision for your elder brother, provided he assumed another name ; and according to this plan, he was educated for the army, and has

attained to rank and honour in the service, as Colonel Sir Henry Musgrave."

"Musgrave!" exclaimed Henry, "I have seen him then—he must have acquired his title lately."

"Recently—he is now on service at Gibraltar, and is expected home by me, daily. Your father entered into a penal bond of forty thousand pounds, never to divulge this secret to a living being; and that, which surprises me, in the progress of the transaction is, that after your birth, I know, for a certainty, although I have no legal evidence to the fact, that Lord Mildenhall gave your father a post-obit bond for thirty thousand pounds, meaning to provide for you handsomely, as a reward for his fidelity, desiring at the same time, that you might be baptized by the same name as your legitimate brother, in order to throw an additional improbability over the story of your relationship, should it ever be agitated. It was to ascertain your possession of that post-obit bond, that, by the desire of the late Lord Mildenhall, I called on you immediately after your father's death. It is clear, however, now, that from some high feeling on the subject he must have destroyed the obligation.

Henry's thoughts instantly glanced back to the dilapidated *escritoire*, and the illegible *pacquet* it contained ;—he made no scruple in mentioning the circumstance, which Sheldwick promised to note down, as he felt it might be important to be known to Sir Henry. Merton, however, could not but enquire to what the extraordinary change in Lord Mildenhall's feelings towards his elder brother was attributable.

“ The fact is,” said Sheldwick, “ his eldest son by the present Lady Mildenhall has turned out a complete *roué*—not a gentlemanly spendthrift, not an aristocratic *vaurien*—but a sot, the associate of vulgarity and low-lived vice. His Lordship contrasted his career with that of Sir Henry, who has cut his way to fame and honour with his sword, and received from his sovereign, titles and orders ; and from the country, a just tribute of praise and gratitude. To these claims generally, and perhaps to a few compunctious visitings, with respect to his amiable and unfortunate mother, which at his advanced age might have affected his Lordship, may be attributed the alteration in his mind, which has induced this alteration in the disposal of his property.”

"And now," said Mr. Hammond, "I think no doubt can rest upon your mind, Mr. Merton, as to the validity of Sir Henry's claim."

"I am indeed convinced," said Henry.

"Now, with respect to the sums which we have advanced," said Hammond, "and the different charges we have been at——"

"It is that, which has been annoying me for the last half-hour," said Merton; "you must be aware that it is no fault of mine, Mr. Hammond."

"Fault!" said the lawyer, "No; it may be nobody's fault; but the accommodation was decidedly afforded to you, upon representations——"

"Made by yourself," said Merton. "I trust you will recollect that, Sir. You admitted my claim, and that, too, after consulting with the executors."

"That is very true; but still we cannot lose by such a transaction, and I must beg to observe——"

"Stay," said Mr. Sheldwick. "I may perhaps prevent unnecessary discussion, and it may be irritation. I will undertake, for Sir

Henry Musgrave, that every thing you may have advanced, and every expense to which you may have been put, shall be re-imbursed."

"Sir," said Merton, perfectly unused to kindness, "how am I to thank you?"

"Never mind, Mr. Merton," said Sheldwick,—" *le bon temps viendra.*"

"Those words," exclaimed Henry—

"Hush, hush! not another syllable—I was merely the channel of that communication—it was the act of a watchful unknown friend; and I sincerely hope, that the words may be prophetic, although we are here met, certainly to blight your brightest prospects."

A stir commenced, as if the conference were breaking up, when Hammond, recurring to the sweet and soothing promise of Mr. Sheldwick, said, "Then, Mr. Sheldwick, you will undertake the arrangement of our claim upon Mr. Merton?"

"I have already said so," replied Mr. Sheldwick.

"We are obliged to you, Sir," said Hammond—"and as for you, my dear Mr. Merton, although we have been unfortunate in this affair, I shall always be most happy to be of the

smallest use to you; and," taking him by the hand, "Mrs. Hammond will be delighted to see you in Bedford-square, where I hope you and my friend here," pointing to Sheldwick, "will come some day and take a family dinner with us."

Henry bowed an acknowledgment, and the gentlemen took leave of each other; but when Henry and Sheldwick had reached the outer door, Mr. Hammond called the latter back; whether to enquire if he were really in earnest about discharging Henry's account, or for any other reason, I am unable to say.

Henry felt, when he quitted Lincoln's-Inn, that it would be impossible now to face Mrs. Meadows. There was an appearance of rashness and haste, if not of deliberate injustice in the whole affair, which he had not the courage to explain to her. What could he do?—in vindicating himself, he must betray all the long hidden secrets of his father's life; he must awaken long dormant scandal; in short, as usual, he was doomed to afflict the hearts of the living, and injure the memory of the dead, by conduct, in which he was innocent of any design to do mischief, or any desire to give pain.

In the tumult of feelings which assailed my poor weather-beaten hero, he bethought him of an expedient, by which the painful circumstances of the case might be most delicately communicated to Mrs. Meadows, not by himself, but by one whose character and appearance would guarantee him, from any suspicion of trickery, or duplicity. He applied on his way towards Berkeley-square, to his companion Mr. Sheldwick, made him a confidant in his love-affair with Fanny; was a good deal surprised to find Mr. Sheldwick extremely well informed upon the subject; and encouraged by the interest which that gentleman apparently took in his welfare, entreated him to see Mrs. Meadows, and break the story of his defeat to her, before he ventured upon an interview with her.

Sheldwick, with a kind-heartedness Merton hardly anticipated, willingly undertook the unpleasant mission, being quite of my hero's opinion, that an explanation of the circumstances by *him*, would, while it developed the exact nature of his disappointment, most satisfactorily exonerate the unfortunate victim of groundless hopes, of any participa-

tion in a scheme against her, or her daughter; and accordingly this new friend of *his*, but ancient friend of his father's, proceeded, armed as he was, with all the ruinous documents, to Thomas's Hotel, leaving poor Henry in a state of dreadful agitation at Steevens's, where he determined to await the return of his ambassador.

He waited and waited; but no Mr. Sheldwick came; but when his patience and hopes were nearly exhausted, he received, not his envoy, but a brief note from him, saying that he had seen Mrs. Meadows, and acquainted her with all the circumstances; that she was very much affected, and he would advise his abstaining from going to the hotel, till he received some further communication from her. So far, all seemed gloomy enough: "but," continued the note, "you must not despond—follow my advice. You will not be long, before you hear from Mrs. Meadows or her daughter, and in the mean time, remember, '*le bon temps viendra.*'"

Mr. Sheldwick did not date his letter—it was brought from Thomas's. It seemed as if he were still with the Meadowses—perhaps exert-

ing his influence to induce her to consent to the marriage. But no! why should he? yet, again, he had willingly undertaken the mission. He was a friend of his father's; and spoke confidently of the "*bon temps*." Then Henry recurred to the loss and destruction of the post-obit: a sum which would have made him perfectly happy; because, united with Fanny's future fortune, they could live so comfortably and so domestically upon it. Who wanted more than two thousand a-year?—Nobody—at least, nobody in a cottage—and so he went on castle-building, and sighing, and biting his fingers, and moaning, and fidgeting till near nine o'clock, when the waiter brought him a letter from Mrs. Meadows herself.

CHAPTER XX.

“The man that would successful be in mischief,
Must, by one means or other, hook in woman.”

HENRY eagerly broke open the envelope, and read the following letter from his intended mother-in-law :

“MY DEAR MR. MERTON,

“I have had a long and most explicit conversation with your friend Mr. Sheldwick ; I may so call him with the greatest truth and justice ; and as the result of that conversation is important, and should be imparted to you with perfect unreserve and temper, both Mr. Sheldwick and I agreed that I should adopt this mode of saying what is to be said, rather than in a personal interview, where the passions sometimes overcome reason, and where, in the agitation of such a discussion, much might be omitted which ought to be stated.

“ Mr. Sheldwick, on quitting me, expressed his determination upon the same principle *not* to see you till after I had communicated our intentions and views to you by letter, which I proceed to do.

“ In the first place, however, I beg you to be assured how sincerely I lament the almost romantic reverses of fortune which you seem doomed to experience through life, and how entirely I acquit you of any intentional deception in the extraordinary and mysterious affair of Lord Mildenhall’s legacy; and this being premised, I am sure you will acquit *me* of any unfairness or mercenary feeling in endeavouring to secure my child’s comfort and respectability through life, an object naturally the dearest to a fond and devoted parent.

“ By the extraordinary revolution of events which have occurred since our acquaintance began, and when I felt justified in positively refusing my consent to your marriage with Frances, you are now most unfortunately placed, it appears, in circumstances less propitious than those in which you were then living, and, as it appears from Mr. Sheldwick’s statement, you have *literally* no income.

“ Mr. Sheldwick, whose interest for your

welfare is intense, has made a proposal which is so extremely liberal, that I really am afraid, as you perpetually say about your own schemes and views, it is too good to be realized. He expresses a thorough conviction that you were provided for, by Lord Mildenhall, in a post-obit bond I think he calls it; (for we women, as your friend Mrs. Burke would say, are no great men of business;) and so convinced is he of the fact, that he states, should the bond really have been destroyed, he himself will undertake to guarantee to you the payment of the amount, which he fixes at thirty thousand pounds, out of the property bequeathed to Sir Henry Musgrave, and which property he knows, was to have been charged with it. He attributes the silence of Lord Mildenhall on the subject in his will to the supposition which he himself once entertained, that your father had, upon some particular feeling, destroyed it, and with it, the necessity of providing for its payment.

“ He speaks so confidently of his power over Sir Henry, and his assurance of a corresponding readiness on his part to provide for his half-brother, that I confess, looking at my poor Frances, and seeing too plainly the effect which

the strong reverses of hope and despair have already had upon her constitution and appearance, I cannot refrain from admitting the perfect reality of this splendid vision, in order to terminate the harassing and vexatious life you have both so long been leading; and under certain stipulations, I abandon my objections, and formally admit you in the character of son-in-law."

Henry threw down the letter, and laying his forehead upon his hands, the big tears chased each other down his cheek—they were tears of the purest joy he had ever felt. Under no circumstances had he been admitted into the Meadows' family with so much feeling, and apparent cordiality. Strange to say, so anomalous was the character of Mrs. Meadows, that she was better pleased to accept him now, than ever. She had the satisfaction of conferring a favour, and, at all events, till the arrival of Sir Henry, must have the rank of *patroness* to her son-in-law.

The stipulations were upon points particularly irksome to Henry; such as the necessity of living in the house with Mrs. Meadows, to save the charges of a separate establishment;

of effecting insurances on his life, payable out of the income Mr. Sheldwick was ready to advance, to the full amount of the interest of the alleged bond; but, what were all these little qualifications, compared with the possession of his Fanny?

Henry hastily crumpled up the letter, and thrusting it into his pocket, seized his hat, and flew up Bruton-street, to Thomas's, where he found the lovely girl and her amiable mother anxiously expecting his arrival.

Such a delightful evening never sure was passed—the arrangements they had to make, the maternal advice of Mrs. Meadows, the arch acquiescence of Fanny in all the lectures she was receiving, the detail of her prospects and proposals, in short, it was one of those charming combinations which rarely occur in the course of any life, and still more seldom in such a life as that of my hero.

Mrs. Meadows had formed an extremely high opinion of her new acquaintance Mr. Sheldwick, and Henry himself had suffered nothing from the developement of the connexion between his father and the noble house of Mil-denhall. To be sure it might have been better

if the alliance between the families had taken place under more *regular* circumstances; but it *was* an alliance, and the lady who loved Lord-hunting beyond any pursuit in the world, conjured up something like aristocracy in the family of Merton, which she had never hoped to find. Certes there was a blot—a bar to it all: for such had been the profound secresy of the whole transaction, that neither Collins nor Debrett had been able to publish it to the world, in their concise and *invariably correct* description of the birth, parentage, and education of the nobility of the United Kingdom.

In charming anticipations past this happy evening of a stormy day; and Merton, who, though he existed at Thomas's, still nominally lived at Steevens's, betook himself to his hotel quite happy;—and for *him* to feel happy, was double happiness, from the novelty of the sensation.

In walking down Bruton-street, he had arranged his whole *ménage*, settled how his pictures were to be hung, how his library should communicate with the other sitting-rooms, and

how very liveinable his villa should be, when a shriek and a crowd attracted his attention, and a gentleman, who appeared considerably agitated, rushed towards him, complaining of ill-usage, and appealed to him for protection from the mob. This immediately roused Henry's feelings, who mingling unconsciously in the affray, soon found himself pushed, and beaten, and knocked about, by various persons, and in various ways, till, at what seemed a favourable opportunity for the purpose, a snatch was made at his pocket, and he felt his pocket-book forcibly taken therefrom.

All his efforts and exertions to secure the man he chiefly suspected, were rendered nugatory by the proportionably increasing difficulties which surrounded him; till, at length, knocking one man to his right and another to his left, he set off at full speed up Bond-street after the flying thief. He was joined in the pursuit by several elderly and decrepid personages, whose natural qualities for the chase were considerably improved by sundry large, long and thick great coats, in which their ancient bodies and limbs were entirely enveloped, in order to secure them from the cold and rain, to which as guardians of the night they must

occasionally be exposed. After a pretty long run, in which Henry distanced all his associates, he reached, and succeeded in securing the supposed depredator, and by the aid of the civil power marched him captively to the watch-house; there he was searched, but no pocket-book was to be found.

One of the distanced watchmen, however, stated, that in his flight he saw the man in charge hand something to a woman who was standing at the corner of Blenheim-street. Upon a question being put to the man, he admitted that he had done so; but that he was not the thief in the first instance.

Henry, whose anxiety upon the subject was mainly directed to the recovery of the lost property, enquired if he knew the woman?—He said he did not. Could he give her name?—No. The watchman said he would save him the trouble even if he could, for he knew the girl well, and would be answerable for getting her that very night, if the man was detained; whereupon the grave nocturnal Magistrate proceeded to order the incarceration of the captive, and Henry was told that his remaining there, till the return of the watchman and the woman, was unnecessary; that if the watchman succeeded

in catching her during the night, which the assembled sages seemed to think if not probable, at least not impossible, she would be taken with the man to Marlborough-street at twelve o'clock the next day.

In Henry's temper of mind, his spirits elated, and his heart at ease, this little adventure was entertaining. There was not much in his pocket-book, so that if he did not eventually recover it, the loss would not be important. He had seen the arcana of a watch-house, which was amusing enough : the little greatness of a constable's dignity, the assumption and presumption, the mingled ignorance and pride of the plebeian president of the council, the artifices of the thief, and the caution of the watchman, formed altogether a scene, which, in the hands of the inimitable Wilkie would have made an admirable picture.

At twelve the following morning he was to be indulged with "an Interior" of Marlborough-street; and considering, that upon all former occasions he had been doomed to appear as a prisoner in such tribunals, he would, in all probability, find something worth his notice even there, at least no evil could lurk in

such a place likely to kill his hopes, or mar his happiness; at all events he was sure of *that*, and to have such an assurance, was by no means disagreeable, to one who, in his practice, reversed the beautiful lines of Shakspeare; and instead of finding

“ Good in every thing,”

generally found a snake beneath the grass, however green and gay it looked.

He returned to his hotel, slept, dreamed of Fanny, watchmen, Mrs. Meadows, the Emperor of Russia, bowers of roses, his new carriage, the wedding-day, and fifty other agreeable things; and rose cheerfully and gaily to meet his bride-elect. There she was, all sweetness and placidity, going through the ordinary occupations of the breakfast-table, without one care to wound her mind, without one grief to cloud her brow.

Mrs. Meadows, who, to all her little perfections, added that of being extremely absent, was sitting gazing at her beautiful child through her glass, perfectly absorbed and entirely forgetting all the rest of the world. The days were now easily numbered which would intervene before the happy ceremony; and the

mother had been calculating unconsciously, for nearly half an hour, what style of dress would be most becoming to Frances, (as she always called her) on the happy occasion.

Henry roused her from this entertaining reverie, by detailing to her his adventure of the preceding night. Fanny interceded with a mistaken humanity for the pilferer, and talked of humanity and suffering poverty with such piteous eloquence, that her lover would certainly have abandoned any further measures, had he not pledged himself to attend upon the Magistrate.

Fanny thought him a perfect barbarian for persisting in his proposed appearance at Marlborough-street, not only because the act itself appeared to be vindictive and harsh, but because *she* had expressed a desire that he should “stay proceedings,”—which she held to be a sufficiently good reason for his instantly obeying her. All, however, was in vain; and without even waiting for his letters, away marched Mr. Henry Merton to perform a feat—the result of which we shall presently see.

To detail all the little uninteresting formalities of the Police-office, would be to waste

time; suffice it to say, that the Magistrates were on the bench, and the hero of the preceding night at the bar; when Mr. Merton having been first duly sworn, proceeded to give a most copious and circumstantial detail of the robbery, the consequent chase, and the final apprehension of the pilferer.

“What have you to say to all this?” said the Magistrate, addressing the prisoner.

“Nothing, your worship,” replied the man. “I was a-standing at the corner of Bruton-street, as quiet as a lamb, wondering what all the noise was about, when a man as I never see’d before in all my life, put the pocket-book into my hand and said, says he, run; which, your worship, that gentleman there, what is the prosecutor, can tell your worship, I accordingly did.”

“But what became of the pocket-book?” said the Justice.

“I shie’d it away at the corner of Blenheim-street, when I found the prosecutor was a-gain-ing upon me.”

“That’s all true, your worship,” said a watchman: “I see him shy it away, but not upon the ground.”

“ How d’ye mean ?” said the Magistrate.

“ He shie’d it at Peg Barton.”

“ Peg who ?” said the Magistrate, thinking the watchman had named a friend of his own.

“ Barton,” said the man.

“ Oh—Peg Barton: and pray, watchman, who is Peg Barton ?”

“ She’s a gal as is always about that corner, your worship ; and generally disguised, in regard to liquor, your worship. They has her in to sing at houses : she is half crazy, I take it.”

“ Do you know this Barton ?” said the Justice, addressing the prisoner.

“ Never see’d her in all my born days, your worship,” said the man.

“ The woman is in custody, Sir,” said the clerk to the Magistrate.

“ That alters the case,” said the Magistrate to the Clerk—“ you hear *that*, prisoner, do you ?”

“ What, Sir ?”

“ That Barton is in custody.”

The man seemed ready to sink, as if he saw conviction staring him in the face.

"I don't know her no more for that," said he.

"Bring her in," said the Magistrate: "you saw him hand her the book?"

"I did, your worship," said the watchman.

An officer was dispatched for the interesting female in question.

"There is no evidence," said the Justice, "to connect the prisoner with the first disturbance, which has been detailed in evidence, as having taken place at the corner of Bruton-street."

"No," said Merton: "I cannot say that I saw the prisoner personally engaged in the affray: he was there, I conclude, and probably of the party; because, when he ran off, he seemed to emerge from the crowd—but I saw nothing of him at the time to enable me to swear to his person."

"No, your worship," said the prisoner: "I was a-looking at a gas light, and thinking what a fine invention it was, and that's all as ever I had to do with it; and when the man shoved the book into my hand I was as innocent as the child unborn as to what he meant, your worship."

“ We shall see by and by : you don’t know this woman—Barton ?”

“ I said so afore, your worship : I never clapped my eyes upon her in all my life.”

Merton’s evidence was here read over to him, by the clerk, and he was desired to sign it, which he accordingly did, and while engaged in this operation, Peg Barton, of whom so much had been said, was brought into the office, and put to the bar.

She appeared young, and somewhat graceful, her face was closely covered with a thick veil, and she seemed anxious not to be seen by the gentlemen of the press, or the amateurs, who are constant attendants of the minor metropolitan tribunals. Merton was desirous, in the natural humanity of his disposition, to read over his evidence again by himself, in order to detect if possible any error which he might have committed, likely to be improperly prejudicial to the prisoner ; and he was so absorbed in this self-imposed duty that he was not aware of the arrival of the female prisoner at the bar, till she was asked her name by the Magistrate.

“ Barton is *my* name,” said the woman in a

tone of voice which thrilled like the knell of death in Merton's ear. Throwing down the book over which he had been poring, he started up—his eyes met those of the prisoner—she uttered a piercing shriek and fell senseless on the floor.

IT WAS HIS WIFE!

CHAPTER XX.

Oh pursue,
Pursue the sacred counsels of your soul,
Which urge you on to virtue. Let not danger,
Nor the encumbering world make faint your purpose :
Assisting Angels shall conduct your steps,
Bring you to bliss, and crown your end with peace.

To find such a wife as Kate alive, and in such a situation, would, my reader will perhaps admit, be of itself no very delightful discovery ; but, when the negative evil of feeling himself irrevocably linked to such a partner, became light by comparison with the *positive* ill, of certain separation from the dear object of all his cares and thoughts, Mr. Merton's present position in the world will be held to be any thing but satisfactory.

The extraordinary sensation produced by the theatrical *denouement* in the office, soon subsided into a feeling of pity and commiseration; and Henry, the injured, ill-used Henry, softened by the altered appearance, the fallen state of his unhappy wife, detailed the circumstances of the case to the Magistrate, and led the miserable girl from the bar, at which she had been placed to hear his accusation.

The shock she had received was terrible; she had even severely wounded herself in the fall against the iron railings in the office, and those beautiful raven curls which had entangled noble hearts in happier days, now hung dishevelled and not bloodless over her tear-fraught eyes. Oh! it was a terrible ruin, and such a living lesson to those who deviate from the strict path of virtue, that the story of it must be told—told as it was by Kate herself, to him, whom she had wronged and betrayed—to him, who had pitied and forgiven her.

Where is the heart so obdurate, where is the wrong so bitter, where the injury so deep, that the tear of sorrowing woman cannot melt and soothe, and wash away the very memory of it? She *was* his wife, and though her con-

duct was indefensible, she was now a suffering sinner. Disease, bodily, perhaps even mental, was on her; and she, with all her ills, *had been* the beloved of his heart, had been his betrothed at the altar. Good God! is there a man in the world, who could have acted at the moment differently from my poor wretched hero, who glanced his "mind's eye" back from the woe-begone culprit before him, to the magnet of Lady Castleton's house in Grosvenor-square, the very centre of the very gayest circle in London; the brilliant, fascinating Kate Etherington, such as he had found her, only a few short months ago!

Some who read these lines will say, this is an over-drawn picture. Let them beware how they indulge in such dangerous incredulity. *It is truth*—truth in disguise, I admit; but, such is the character of a descent from virtue to vice in woman.—Once be the limit passed—once be the boundary crossed, which distinctly and clearly separates right from wrong, the precipitation is terribly and inconceivably rapid. Read Kate's history, which follows, and watch the workings of crime, when once admitted into the female heart.

Henry led the wretched creature to a coach, which had been sent for, and with an aching heart proceeded to secure for her, what she had recently not enjoyed—a quiet comfortable lodging. How he made his arrangements, it is needless here to detail; suffice it to say, that in a few hours Kate was provided with a comfortable bed, a nurse and physician, and housed in a respectable family, who, made acquainted as they were with the peculiar circumstances of the case, used every possible exertion for her accommodation.

Henry's protracted stay from his bride-elect, while in attendance upon his restored wife, created strong and extraordinary emotions in that little heart which was all his own, and which, accustomed to ills in every coming hour, beat with anxious trepidation at his lengthened absence. As soon as he was able, however, he wrote a hasty note to Fanny, saying that business prevented his return so soon as he anticipated; but that he hoped to see them at, or soon after the dinner hour.

Having despatched this, and having received, from the physician, assurances of Kate's probable restoration to health, (an announcement which,

however conclusive against his desired union with Fanny, he heard with great satisfaction,) he repaired to her chamber, and desirous, beyond measure, to know how she had escaped the death which it was supposed had been self-inflicted, seated himself beside her bed, and implored her to detail the circumstances which had reduced her to her present deplorable and melancholy situation in society.

Kate was hardly equal to the narrative, which she felt anxious to give to the injured and gentle-hearted husband ; but, collecting her scattered spirits, and rousing all her energies, she began that history, whence, brief and dreadful as it is, may be culled a lesson, which the proudest should not scorn to profit by, nor the purest refuse to listen to.

“ When I left you, Henry,” said Kate, bursting into a flood of tears—and she did not weep alone of the two—“ when I left you, I felt myself injured, betrayed, deceived ; I then had a proud heart and a spirit of lofty bearing, I could have killed the man who wronged me. I did worse to *you*, for I betrayed you. Yes—yes—you must hear it all. It was not love for Lavington ; do not fancy it. It was a sentiment

made up of every evil passion that can inflame the heart, by which I was possessed—and oh ! that friend—that dreadful friend—Charlotte Fletcher!—she—she did it all : by her advice, under her counsel, did I act. She was older and more calculating, colder and more worldly ; Lavington even paid her for her agency ! Oh, Merton, Merton, can I degrade myself by such a disclosure !”

Her feelings were too much for her, and she sank exhausted on the pillow.

“ Calm yourself, Kate,” said Merton, in a tone of abject distress.—He was listening to a siren who *had* won him from his dearest love. She was a fallen angel, it is true ; but what a state for a man to be in. He covered his face with his hand, and leaned his head upon the table which stood beside him.

“ Oh Merton,” said the wretched victim—“ how I *did* love you—how I should have loved, how happy we might have been, but for —— ”

Here she paused.

Merton filled up the hiatus—“ but for Fanny Meadows.” He did not utter the words : yet his thoughts flew like lightning to Berkeley-square.

“No matter—no matter; that’s gone and past, Kate is lost, fallen—yes, yes, Henry,” said she, raising herself in bed, “Kate Etherington, she who has spurned the flower of the land—she who has rejected the brightest offers—she who was the life and soul of society—she who was sought, courted, and caressed by the wise, the virtuous, and the brave—she who was your wife, has been a common prostitute! Yes, Merton, yes—to buy her bread, to save her from starving; oh, think of your poor, poor Kate!”

A second fainting fit (from which a flood of tears relieved her) ensued.

“For Heaven’s sake,” said Henry, “spare me—spare yourself this—it is needless to recur!”

“Quite: I know that,” said she. “Would to God you had never found me. I could have died with pleasure in an hospital, or in a poor-house; I had made up my mind to that; but, oh! to see you again ——”

“How came the report so current of your self-destruction?” said Henry, falteringly.

“How!—do you think I could have ever *seemed* to live, after what happened at Paris;

detected in robbery or something worse, cheating at a gambling-table, see, see how debased a noble mind can be! I, who in the plenitude of my power and gaiety, ridiculed, caricatured, and libelled a whole family, who were only suspected of foul play at paltry guinea commerce,—I—I could descend to cheat at a public gaming-house in Paris!”

“Merciful Powers!” said Henry.

“The principle was gone then, Henry!” said the agitated girl. “The boundary had been crossed—I had swerved from the path of honour. Why?—how? Oh, let me tell you—let me ring it into your ears, that when in happy days to come for *you*, and when the busy world tread over my unknown grave, you again may force it on the minds of children yet unborn. I was quick, talented, gay, happy, vivacious; but I was educated *for this world*; and strange and wild as my sayings may seem, and unheeded as may go the preachings of an adulteress and a prostitute ——”

“Oh, Kate, Kate!” interrupted Merton.

“True, true to the letter!” exclaimed the half-frenzied woman. “Unheeded I say, as

driven by hunger—I could not beg. Believe me, when I tell you, I have gladly passed the night upon the steps of doors, over which I had, only a little year before, been handed to our carriage—but spare me ! Henry—spare me !”

Henry indeed felt every disposition to spare her, for it was evident that the detail of these facts and the recollection of her past life caused her the most terrible emotions ;—still his anxiety to know how, even in a career of vice, she could have fallen so low, so speedily, induced him to wish for a detail, however brief, of her ruinous progress to the moment when he found her brought as a culprit to hear his accusation.

He gathered from her narrative and from her solemn declaration, that she was wholly innocent of any participation in the theft of the pocket-book. She positively denied all knowledge of the man who was in custody ; she said he thrust the book into her hand in passing ; and that her terror was such when she saw the pursuit, that she threw it from her, and fled in an opposite direction, unconscious that her person could have been recognised by the watchmen in Bond Street.

Henry felt relieved by the conviction that she was free from any participation in the present crime ; and, after endeavouring to soothe her with that tenderness of which his heart was full, he commended her to the care of the landlady of the house and the nurse, and left her in a sleep produced by the exhaustion which her apprehension, confinement, and subsequent agitation had so naturally caused, promising to be with her again early the following day.

His mind was occupied on his return to Berkeley Square with thoughts somewhat different from those, which filled it when he last quitted the hotel, and no part of the dreadful truths which he had so unexpectedly learned affected him more, than the fear he felt of communicating those truths to his gentle Fanny. What heart, what constitution could endure such varied, such repeated attacks as those to which she had now been constantly exposed for nearly a year, during which period, the mutations from hope to fear, and from joy to sadness had been incessant ? It was a life of fever, and Henry dreaded this last accession

of grief and surprise, as highly dangerous, if not absolutely fatal, to the suffering girl.

He resolved upon no account to disclose the terrible secret of Kate's situation and existence immediately, and contrived in his own mind many schemes and plans for breaking it by degrees to Mrs. Meadows, trusting to her discretion to communicate it to Fanny in the most prudent and judicious manner. Then his thoughts turned to Mr. Sheldwick, and he was half resolved to make him his confident and counsellor, but still he felt that he must go to the hotel in the first instance, and he determined to trust to chance and circumstances for an opportunity of opening the fatal intelligence to Mrs. Meadows, and if no such opportunity presented itself, of putting himself again into the hands of his noble and disinterested friend, who had already secured the one great point, upon which nothing but the events of the present morning could have foiled or defeated him.

Arrived at the hotel, judge his surprise at finding the Wilsons returned from Brighton, all anxiety to meet him and greet him. Something so pleasant had occurred—something so

agreeable, so unexpected, Mrs. Wilson seemed actually prepared to fly into his arms. Wilson caught him by both hands, Mrs. Meadows looked attentively through her glass at the expression of his countenance; and Fanny, with cheeks glowing, and eyes sparkling with pleasure, bid him guess the news.

"I cannot guess," said the broken-hearted young man, who knew that nothing could make *him* happy.

"You must," cried one.

"Do," exclaimed another.

"The most improbable," screamed Mrs. Meadows.

"The most unlikely," added Mr. Wilson.

"It gives me equal pleasure with yourself," said Mrs. Wilson.

"What is it, my dear people?" said Henry.

"Oh, tell him at once," exclaimed Wilson.

"I will," said Fanny: "your ticket in the Lottery is drawn *a prize of Twenty Thousand Pounds!*"

"Indeed!" said Henry, whose joy was not quite so unbounded as his friends expected; first, because the circumstances in which he

was involved at the moment were sufficient to damp any joy he might have felt, if he had actually possessed the ticket ; and secondly because, above all other reasons for his serenity upon the occasion, the share in question, which his wife's creditors would not take from him, although he had inserted it in his schedule, was *not* in his possession, having been stolen from him the preceding night in the identical pocket-book, his anxiety for the recovery of which, had brought his faithless Kate before his astonished eyes.

It was evident to all the party that some untoward accident had occurred, by which the advantages likely to arise from this sudden acquisition had been annihilated, and upon closer enquiry he confessed so much of the dreadful story yet untold, as related to his adventure and consequent robbery.

Wilson, who was a man of business, and *au fait* in all mercantile manœuvres and official punctilios, immediately pointed out the course to be pursued :—notice should be given to the lottery-office-keeper to refuse the payment, affidavits were to be made, and the number being perfectly known, by the circumstance of

Mrs. Wilson's holding the other half of the ticket, the thing was all as clear as light, easy, practicable, and indeed settled; and Henry was encouraged not to annoy himself in the least about an accident so easily to be repaired.

Accordingly, on thorns, his eyes filled with the dreadful vision of his emaciated wretched wife, Henry remained, literally careless of his loss which he regarded as certain, notwithstanding the soothing opinion and narratives of similar cases put forth by Mr. Wilson, till past midnight, when he retired as usual to a sleepless bed, whence he was again hurried before nine o'clock by his active and intelligent friend, who declared that no time should be lost in taking active measures, and who accordingly conveyed him at the full speed of a hackney-coach to the office where the ticket had been purchased, arrived at which, they were disagreeably surprised by being informed that the half in question had been presented for payment the preceding afternoon; that the bearer had received the money, and as a proof thereof Henry was gratified with a sight of the share itself.

Nothing more was to be said, the notes paid

might be traced, it was true, and they would do what they could, and were very sorry, and *all that* ; but my poor hero saw his usual luck predominating, and cutting short the plannings of the parties for the recovery of the property drew his friend from the shop with something like irritation, and returned to Berkeley Square to report progress; and prepare for the *denouement* of the more serious evils of his present situation.

CHAPTER XXI.

“Oh, Love! how are thy precious, sweetest moments
Thus ever crossed, thus ever vexed with disappointments ;
Now pride, now fickleness, fantastic quarrels
And sullen coldness give us pain by turns.
Malicious meddling chance is ever busy
To bring us fears, disquiet and delays ;
And e'en at last when after all our waiting,
Eager we think to snatch the dear-bought bliss,
Ambition calls us to its sullen cares,
And Honour, stern, impatient of neglect,
Commands us to forget our ease and pleasures,
As if we had been made for nought but toil,
And Love were not the business of our lives.”

HENRY, as we have seen, thought, upon the first blush of the thing, that any attempt at a concealment of the facts which had occurred at the police-office from the Meadows's, would be as unfair as unavailing ; and yet he felt all the difficulties of disclosing an event which finally destroyed his hopes and those of his fond Fanny toge-

ther. He considered the matter as he was returning with Wilson, and was so absorbed in the engrossing subject, that he felt perfectly unmoved by the lamentations which his companion poured forth, with respect to the pecuniary loss he had just suffered, and quite surprised him by the philosophy, not to say apathy, with which he encountered so important an evil.

Partly to relieve his mind from the weight of such a secret, and partly to justify himself in Wilson's mind from a charge of insensibility, and still more in the hope of securing him as the medium through which the painful annunciation might be made to the females of the family, Henry at length resolved to unbosom himself to Wilson, and accordingly invited him to a *sederunt* at Steevens's, in which he related all those circumstances with which the reader is already acquainted.

Wilson was overcome with astonishment and vexation, although he felt gratified that Merton had thus acquitted himself of an apparently unnatural stoicism with respect to the loss he had sustained in the lottery-ticket, and which had lowered his character in Wilson's eyes. Wilson saw at once the difficulty and danger

of again dashing the cup of happiness from poor Fanny's lip, and was moreover apprehensive that when Mrs. Meadows was made acquainted with this fresh disaster she might be inclined to consider all the foregone proceedings of our hero and himself, as attempts at deception, seeing that she was naturally suspicious, and seeing that the incidents were of themselves sufficiently romantic, sudden in their succession, and varied in their character, to startle any moderate person, not fully prepared to admit the almost miraculous force of poor Merton's ill-fortune.

Many schemes and contrivances were proposed and discussed by the anxious young men, and that which was at length adopted, although diametrically in opposition to Henry's original design, appeared (under the circumstances at least) the most considerate to the tender feelings with which they had to combat.

The state of Kate's health was such, that constantly attended as she was, by two eminent physicians, her recovery appeared very improbable, and although Henry felt no base or selfish desire to accelerate his own

happiness by her demise, still reason and common sense suggested, that if a short period should terminate the sins and sufferings of the unhappy girl it would be an act of humanity to delay the celebration of his marriage with Fanny by some innocent equivocation, some justifiable evasion suited to the purpose, rather than unnecessarily agitate her wounded heart, and perhaps reduce her to a state as precarious and doubtful as the object of their present solicitude.

This plan was accordingly decided upon, Henry was to feign important business in the country connected with his late father's mysterious property, and thus gain time to judge whether his wedded wife's recovery would eventually bar his marriage with Fanny, or whether her death would leave him at liberty to celebrate it. It was a temporizing scheme, perhaps injudicious, although the actual state of Mrs. Merton's health was such as to leave it extremely doubtful how, and when, her wretched career would terminate.

Fanny and her mother received the intelligence of Henry's proposed excursion, from Wilson, with a feeling which those accustomed

to disappointment are fully capable of appreciating—a painful conviction of the truth of one's worst apprehensions which partake but slightly of surprise.

“I thought something would happen,” said Mrs. Meadows,—“It is not to be!”

Fanny was silent, but her lip quivered and her cheek was pale.

“Merely a postponement,” said Wilson, affecting to be jocose,—“Hope deferred.”

“Ay!” sighed Mrs. Meadows: “it is all mighty well to talk; but you’ll see.”

Fanny rose hastily from her chair, and quitted the room.

“Frances dear, Frances,” cried her mother, meaning that she should return, but she did not or would not hear her, and Wilson’s wife followed her out of the apartment.

When Wilson was left alone with Mrs. Meadows, he felt greatly disposed to tell her the real facts, but he foresaw much violence, and anticipated some decisive measure with respect to the future intercourse of the lovers, to result from the intelligence he should be obliged to give, if he once opened the subject, and he walked to the window in silence.

Where is Henry going, did you say?" enquired Mrs. Meadows.—This point the plotters had not arranged.

"I forget the place—somewhere in Sussex, I think," said Wilson; "but," added the *fidus Achates*, "he will be here to take leave, at dinner-time."

"It is altogether the most extraordinary history," continued the lady, in an under-tone. "People talk of fate and destiny, and I have always held it quite impious to entertain a notion of the existence of any such imaginary influence: but really and truly the worries of Merton, and that poor girl, are so endless, so varied, so —— I would stake my existence that they never *are* married."

"Oh, my dear Mrs. Meadows," said Wilson, "look out for brighter prospects than that; consider this is but a temporary delay, and I am sure, from what I have understood of the case, the results of this expedition may be—must be beneficial."

"*Nous verrons, nous verrons*," said the mother-in-law, shaking her head; "but I must go to poor Frances. What time do you say Merton will be here?"

“ At six, I think,” he said.

And she left the room repeating “ *nous verrons*,” with the air of one who is convinced that an evil is irremediable, and feels that the displeasure of Providence is over her.

The hour which was to bring Merton to the hotel that day, came not; he was not sufficiently an adept in dissimulation to bear up against the scrutiny and enquiry of three ladies, all deeply interested in an affair he was most desirous of keeping totally secret. He could write and deceive his beloved, under the impression, that it would be eventually beneficial to their mutual interests, and productive of their future happiness; but he could not play the traitor in the presence of such sweetness and innocence, even for his own advantage.

A brief note to Wilson explained, that he was forced away, and that he could not make up his mind to a formal leave-taking; that his heart was bleeding at the necessity for his departure, as sudden as unexpected, as peremptory as undesired; and enclosing a few tender lines to his dear Fanny, he betook himself to an obscure lodging, in the neighbourhood of

that, which had been taken for poor Kate, where he could obtain daily and hourly information of the progress of her disorder, and whence, in the dusk of the evening, he could make his personal enquiries of the respectable old gentlewoman, who, with her daughter, kept the house in which the apartments had been secured.

The scheme perfectly succeeded, and nothing struck any of the assembled groupe, but the probability that something very unpleasant would result from Henry's new expedition. Although it must be confessed, Wilson had unwittingly despatched him into Sussex, whereas his own letter mentioned Gloucestershire as the place of his destination; and although Mr. Sheldwick, the most invaluable and intimate friend of his bosom, happened to call at the hotel in the evening, and throw out generally, that he had met Henry in the course of the morning and that he had never hinted one single syllable about any journey at all.

This last circumstance was the only one which tended to rouse Mrs. Meadows's suspicions upon this particular point; and it

certainly appeared strange, that Henry should have failed to mention his inevitable business, which related, as he had represented it, to affairs in which Mr. Sheldwick had so deeply interested himself. Still, however, he might have had reasons for his silence, and the arch lady was herself just enough of a manœuvrer to give all her friends credit for some design in every action they committed.

Meanwhile poor Kate's condition was wretched beyond description. Her mind was visibly affected by the dreadful disclosure of her real state, while her wounded pride, her broken spirit, her abject degradation, were all wearing upon the animal constitution. She wandered in her conversation, and her sleepless nights were rendered horrible by visions of her former power and attractions. She would rave and call upon her husband, upon Lady Castleton, and then upbraid them in the most violent language for their cruel neglect of her. Many dreadful disclosures which she made during these terrible visitations lost their effect and were rendered innocuous, because they were considered mere ravings of temporary insanity; but alas! there was much of what

she raved about too true to be discredited, too horrid to be detailed !

Wilson was Henry's sole confidant in this affair ; he regularly called on him in the obscure lodging which he had taken in Poland Street, into whose recesses no cognizable being was likely to intrude, and where he always lay *perdu* till the shades of night favoured his stolen visits to the neighbouring house which contained the wretched invalid.

Merton's tender nature was dreadfully afflicted by the sight of his perishing, once-blooming wife. There ever mingled with his regret a feeling of remorse : he was conscious that he *had* deceived her, that in fact his misconduct had been legally and morally accounted and held to be a justification of hers, and it was impossible to behold the rapid and awful decay of all her perfections, without a sensation of torturing anxiety made more dreadful by the consciousness of its inutility.

It had been arranged in the formation of their scheme, that Henry should write during his absence under cover to Wilson, and that Wilson should, under the pretext of getting franks, or for some other equally *useable* reason, undertake to enclose and forward Fanny's

letters to Henry; each of these exemplary young men exerting all their powers to carry on the deception, because they were convinced that they were acting for the best.

A week had nearly elapsed since Merton went from town, as they thought, and still, though at a heavy pace it must be confessed, the preparations for the marriage went on progressively; the various purchases incidental to such a ceremony were made, but Mrs. Meadows felt at the moment she was buying any piece of lace, or silk, or satin, or whatever it might be, that the ill-fortune which hung over her intended son-in-law, would somehow interfere with the peaceful celebration of that event which was the immediate cause of the disbursement. Every step taken was taken because it could do no harm to take it; they were leading a life of negatives, and Fanny was sufficiently accustomed to disappointments to share in her mother's feelings, and often in her expression of them.

Amongst other decorations suited to the approaching gaities, artificial flowers (and amongst those there really *are* roses without thorns) were considered essentials, and accordingly

search was made amongst the *coterie* of Mrs. Meadows's acquaintance for some *artiste*, from whose hands might come those graceful garlands which would mock nature itself, and delude even bees and butterflies into a belief of their reality: after much research, one of the staff at Howell's and James's happened to know a French lady just arrived from the Rue Richelieu, who was a perfect *floriste*;—there never had been seen any thing so inimitably good as her roses, her jasmines surpassed all attempts at rivalry; in short, if she could only be prevailed upon to permit Mrs. Meadows to see her collection before it was given to the world, it would be an object, which, to the miserable man-milliner who was talking about it, appeared of the most vital importance.

Thus tempted, Mrs. Meadows and Fanny, under the directions of the shopman, were driven to the apartments of Mme. Delamotte, which were situated in Poland Street, and where they succeeded in finding her at home, surrounded by band-boxes full of blue barley-corns, and red hop-flowers, and scarlet jasmines, and yellow roses, with wire sprigs of brown myrtles, bearing white beads, and crim-

son jonquils with straw-coloured leaves, and in short, of all the tawdry trumpery which, to the disgrace of decent society, is imported at a profligate expense, smuggled into the country to the injury of the revenue, sought, admired, and worn, because it is foreign, while the industrious Englishwoman, whose talents, if similarly applied, would produce equally *beautiful* results, is left neglected to pine and perhaps starve, or at best carry about a great magpie's cage lined with oil-skin, in which the French frippery is to be conveyed through the streets, to its frivolous patronesses.

Have any of my male readers ever visited a flower and feather merchant's horde in company with a couple of selecting ladies? If there be one of the number who has, and really knows how those darling women love to toss and tumble over every parcel and packet, and ransack every band-box and bundle, to him do I appeal for the truth of the assertion I make, that Mrs. Meadows and her daughter remained rummaging over, and trying on, every article in poor Mme. Delamotte's collection, till it was so dark that they could not distinguish a rose from

a ranunculus, and departed at last in the dusk, buying nothing but a small bottle of *esprit-de-rose*, one box of pastilles, and one *tube* of Jean Farina's indubitable.

It was, as I said, quite dusk when they began to descend Mme. Delamotte's staircase, indeed so obscure was it that Mrs. Meadows, who preceded her daughter, had nearly precipitated herself from the top to the bottom of the flight.

"*Arrêtez, Madame,*" said Mme. Delamotte: "*Ma chère Marie cherchez une lumière.*"

Saying which, she proceeded to ring the bell of the drawing-room, and Mrs. Meadows retraced her step, or steps to the door of the apartment, till the light should be procured. Fanny was behind her.

In this interval, and just at the moment in which Marie was approaching with the candle, the door of the room immediately above them was shut, and a man hastily stepped down the upper flight of stairs. He saw nobody in the doorway of the drawing-room; but as the light gleamed on his face in descending, Mrs. Meadows and Fanny both saw that it was—Mr. Henry Merton.

He proceeded along the hall, opened the door, went out, and shut the door after him.

"Frances," said Mrs. Meadows, as if she had seen a dreadful vision.

"I saw it," replied Frances:—and unable to stand, she caught at her mother's arm, and sank into a chair.

"*Ah, mon Dieu!—et Mademoiselle est malade?*" cried Mme. Delamotte.

"Stay," said the English maid-servant, "I'll run for some water."

"*Vite, ma chère, vite donc !*"

And away flew the maid.

Fanny remained insensible ; but a speedy application of water to her pale cheeks, and a variety of those indescribable essences and esprits in which such a *mâgasin* could not fail to abound, to her temples and nostrils, soon restored the unhappy girl to a sense of her miseries and her wrongs.

"Who," said Mrs. Meadows, to the English maid, knowing that the fair *floriste* could not understand her—"who is the gentleman above stairs?"

"His name is Smith, I believe, ma'am ; he has only been here about a week," said the woman : "there is a lady in the next street

whom he knows, and he goes there every evening about this time."

Mrs. Meadows would not have made the enquiry in the hearing of Fanny, had she anticipated such an answer. Fanny had again fainted; indeed she continued in such a state of dreadful agitation, that it was with difficulty she could be conveyed home in the carriage which had brought them, and which, to add to the *désagréments* of the affair, Mrs. Meadows had borrowed from a very punctilious and particular old gentlewoman of her acquaintance.

This last occurrence was extremely unfortunate, because my poor hero himself was perfectly unconscious of the sensation he had produced, or the discovery he had brought about, for he did not see either Mrs. Meadows or her daughter; and the total dissimilarity of the antique vehicle which was standing at the door, from the well-known olive-green chariot with the dark-brown liveries, prevented his surmising that its tenants were persons so interesting to himself, and whose presence there was fraught with the worst consequences.

Mrs. Meadows and Fanny both resolved to preserve a perfect silence on their return home,

as to what they had seen ; for they felt assured, by the various stories Wilson had told, and the officiousness with which he forwarded and received the letters of Henry and his affianced fair one, that he was an accomplice in the plot, and had lent his aid to a scheme of deception apparently as unprincipled and heartless, as ever was contrived by mortal man.

The depression and altered manner of Fanny, however, spoke the truth in silent eloquence ; and Mrs. Wilson, who was pretty well accustomed to the changes of expression which, under varying circumstances, animated her friend's beautiful countenance, saw in the down-cast eye, the pallid cheek, the abstracted look, the starting tear, indications of some dreadful event, which evidently had occurred ; but not being in the secret of Merton's real situation, she had no suspicion whence could have arisen the new evil which had assailed her ill-fated favourite.

Meanwhile the distant and reserved behaviour of both Mrs. Meadows and Fanny to Wilson, and the restraint under which they spoke to him and of Henry, were perfectly visible to him, and he endeavoured to rally from the feeling

with which it inspired him—all, however, in vain ; and nobody was sorry when the evening closed : and Fanny and her mother retired to the dressing-room of the latter, to hold a council upon the state of the family politics.

Mrs. Meadows declared that Fanny ought never to see Merton again ; that to ask any explanation of such conduct, as his, would be perfectly derogatory ; that the whole affair appeared to be a studied insult ; and the association of Wilson in it, the most unprovoked treachery that ever was practised upon confiding and affectionate friends. The only point worthy of consideration was, how to break off the affair with proper dignity and temper, since this second defection of her wavering lover could not be palliated by any of those excuses which he made when Miss Etherington drew him from his allegiance to Fanny, and which, grounded upon truth as they then evidently were, had upon that occasion been admitted.

Still Fanny could not hear of the necessity of “breaking-off” the match ; she yet hoped that he might explain or extricate himself, if an opportunity were afforded him. Had he no relations, of whom they did not know ; was he

not even now performing some pious duty to a sick friend?

“Friend! my dear,” said Mrs. Meadows: “it is a lady! The days of Platonism are over; besides, what relation can he have? None of the Mildenhall family would be lodging in Poland-street, and he has no relations but the Mildenhalls.”

“His life has been made up of such extraordinary incidents,” said Fanny.

“Frances, my dear love, do not attempt to defend or extenuate such conduct. You have not the common spirit of a woman: discarded, rejected, and abandoned for the second time, even now, you persist in pleading for the man who has so deeply, so wantonly, and so basely wronged you.”

“What object could he have in such conduct?” asked the daughter.

“A lady, my dear:—did not you hear what the woman said?” replied the parent.

“Yes, my dear mother,” said Fanny: “but it does not necessarily follow that it should be a young lady.”

“Young! What has youth to do with it, child?” answered Mrs. Meadows: “youth is

by no means an indispensable quality with men who know how to appreciate female attractions." Saying which, she rose from her seat, and looking at herself in the glass, which was placed over the fire-place, smoothed with her taper snow-white fingers, the jet black brows which arched over her sparkling eyes, and pushed back the curls which had fallen loosely over her polished forehead.

"I cannot believe him guilty of such shameful conduct," said Fanny, who looked another way, that she might not let her mother see that she observed her little *mauvœuvres*.

"What do you propose, then, my obstinate girl?" asked Mrs. Meadows. "We know that Wilson is in the secret, whatever it is: can you condescend to let him know that you are aware of the *manœuvrings* which are going forward, and ask him to explain—can you subject yourself to the mortification of being known to have waited till you were cast off by a lover, to reject him? That would not be good policy, surely: you had better get a character for fickleness, than proclaim yourself to the world a forsaken damsel. I have no patience with either one or the other of the

men in the business; and your dear friend Mrs. Wilson too, she must be extremely candid and affectionate, not to have told you all she knew about it. Let us, however, get to bed, and consult our pillows upon the best mode of proceeding. I shall say nothing more to influence your conduct upon the occasion, than I have said already: I know how I should act under similar circumstances, if the case were mine. It is, however, your affair; and if, as I said before, your spirit can brook such insults,—if, in fact, your love has so completely absorbed every other feeling—why, then by all means degrade yourself, and condescend to come to terms with your flying swain. If not, make up your mind, break off the connexion at once, and we will leave town to-morrow, either for France, or for Brighton, or some other place, away from London, where time and reason will reconcile you to that which, I am sure, if not a duty to me, is an imperative duty to yourself.”

Saying which, and wishing her child a good night, she imprinted a parental kiss upon her snowy cheek, and dismissed her; rang for her maid, and proceeded to the operations of the nocturnal toilette.

In the mean time, Wilson and his wife had been holding a midnight council also; in which she expressed her astonishment at Fanny's altered manner to both of them. His surprise was less extravagant than hers, because he felt that something might have transpired to occasion the change, although he could not at all imagine how even the discovery that Henry's wife was actually living, could induce any thing like anger or dissatisfaction on the part of the Meadowses towards him.

"It is quite evident," said Wilson, "that something very extraordinary has occurred."

"From the time they returned from shopping," said his lady, "I observed the alteration: indeed Fanny, I believe, had been taken very ill while they were out, which delayed them so much, that old Mrs. Grimsby sent here to enquire after her carriage, which she had lent Mrs. Meadows, in consequence of one of her own horses having been lamed."

"Fanny had been ill!" said Wilson: "perhaps, then, that might have given the appearance of coldness."

"No, no; there was a decided and marked change. And when I asked where they had

been to get some French essences and *Eau de Cologne*, which they brought in with them, Fanny merely said, 'At the French milliner's we had been speaking of;' and then the conversation dropped. So unlike her unreserved manner, in which, at another time, she would have described every thing she had seen, particularly at a place where she knew I was to have gone when they first got the direction; for, till to-day, they never knew that the florist lived in Poland-street."

"What street, my life?" said Wilson.

"Poland-street," answered his placid lady.

"Poland devils!" exclaimed Wilson.

"George——"

"I see it all! I know it!—the whole thing is found out!"

"What!"

"Good heavens! only think—is the woman's name Delamotte?"

"It is. What then?"

"Never mind, never mind. What on earth shall I do? I shall go mad. Of all streets in the world, think of their going to Poland-street! and of all milliners in Poland-street, to Mrs. Delamotte's!"

Any body accustomed to the usages of domestic life, or the customs of married people in particular, will perceive in a moment that neither the conversation nor the secret could rest where it was. Wilson had gone too far to recede ; and, as it was evident that an *éclaircissement* must take place speedily, he took credit to himself for disclosing the whole story to his wife, whose anger against poor Fanny was instantly turned to sorrow and compassion : for it was evident, ignorant as they were, how the discovery had been made, or how much of the secret had actually been discovered, that the visit to Poland-street was intimately connected with the change of manner in their friends ; and that what they attributed to caprice or ill-humour, was founded in grief and mortification at events in which, it was but too clear the ladies had imagined that he had unnecessarily mixed himself up.

Mrs. Wilson's idea of the thing was simply this,—that if her husband had trusted her with the whole truth in the first instance, it would have been by far the best and wisest thing he could have done ; an opinion in which, feeling as I do, that there is no friend to man so true,

so real, and so good as woman, I am very much inclined to agree with her.

Having now detailed the proceedings of the two councils which were simultaneously held in different apartments of Thomas's Hotel, it will be but fair and proper to give my reader that, which no individual of the four last mentioned persons enjoyed during the remainder of the night—a little repose.

CHAPTER XXII.

“ And will you ever be thus kind, my lord ?
Ever thus charming ? ever thus sincere ?
Will not reflection freeze this marriage nectar ?
Will not your draughts of love be bitter, think you,
When longer mix’d with pleasure’s wormwood—WIFE ? ”

It was now clear to Wilson that an ample explanation of all the circumstances was due not only to the Meadowses, but to the character of his friend ; and the only question which remained undecided was, how to make that explanation in the manner least calculated to distress or disturb the innocent object of their solicitude.

It was at length agreed that Mrs. Wilson should undertake to prepare the minds of the female part of the family for the dreadful dis-

closure, while her husband proceeded to Henry to communicate the discovery which he had no doubt had been made, but to what extent even he was yet ignorant.

All their schemes and designs, however, were frustrated and rendered abortive by the unexpected arrival of a note from Lady Castleton, addressed to Mrs. Meadows, and which, while it confirmed the truth of Merton's residence in the place where they had seen him, accounted for his conduct by the following sudden *dénouement* of all the hidden circumstances connected with his retreat:—

“ DEAR MADAM, Grosvenor-square, Thursday.

“ I feel quite sure that you will excuse the abrupt manner in which I break the continued silence which we have mutually observed towards each other for some months back, when you know the nature of the appeal I am about to make to you.

“ There are certain rules and regulations by which society is maintained in certain classes; from a violation of which, results certain and unqualified expulsion; but feelings and affections are not to be governed by such

strict and rigid discipline. You will, I am certain, enter into my views when I explain more distinctly what I mean.

“ I have just heard that my once gay and lively Kate Etherington is alive, and in the most unhappy circumstances : she is fallen into the very depths of misery and wretchedness ; but I was pleased to hear that her husband, putting away the remembrance of his wrongs, has behaved to her in the most humane and exemplary manner. How to address him I know not, except through you ; for I conclude, from what I have recently heard, that you are acquainted with his place of residence.

“ Of course I, no more than yourself, can personally come forward in the business ; but whatever aid and assistance my lord and myself can contribute in the cause, we are most anxious to offer : whatever may have been the faults and follies of both parties, their continued sufferings have amply punished them, and we feel bound, without committing ourselves openly, to do every thing we can at this crisis to soothe and soften the poor young creatures’ sufferings.

“ To tell you the real truth, I have felt some repugnance in writing to Mr. Merton direct; for his conduct, whatever it may appear to the world, has so greatly displeased Lord Castleton, that he, in fact, proposed my addressing you on this delicate subject. All I want to know is, the real state of Kate’s health, and what her husband’s views are with respect to her future existence. It is to that point, my lord and myself look; because, if she could be removed to pure air and a quiet residence in the country, her health might be restored, and she might pass her life in a repentant solitude, comparatively happy.

“ We have only heard the outline of the case from one of the Marlborough-street justices, who happened to dine in company with Lord Castleton at some charitable meeting at a tavern. We are, I repeat, extremely anxious to know farther particulars; and concluding that you are likely to have the best knowledge of the facts, I have written to you for advice and information.

“ I need not again entreat you to forgive what may appear an intrusion; the warmth of my feelings must plead an excuse. With my

best remembrances to Miss Meadows, believe me, dear madam,

“ Your’s faithfully,

“ JULIANA CASTLETON.”

Whether this letter was intended as an insult, or whether it was written with that inattention to little things which great people occasionally display, I know not,—its effect was dreadful; the whole tremendous truth burst at once upon the trembling girl and her astonished mother.

Fanny did not utter a syllable, but sat herself quietly down in a chair, and fixed her eyes stedfastly upon the ground. The blow was too powerful even to rally against, and she looked as if she had submitted herself eternally and entirely to fate.

Mrs. Meadows was overwhelmed at the intelligence, and at the appeal contained in Lady Castleton’s letter; she was angry beyond measure, and ran over in her mind the various modes of revenging the affront which she conceived her ladyship meant to inflict upon her, by the application. Yet, she was a Countess; and, perhaps, was only moved to such appa-

rently strange conduct by the strength of her feelings towards Kate : and if that should be the case, how agreeable it would be to be joined in a benevolent pursuit with a person of her ladyship's consideration !

While she was thus doubting what course to pursue, and while poor Fanny was sitting absorbed in grief, Wilson and his wife entered the room, prepared for a disclosure of the event, with which their unhappy friends had so abruptly been made acquainted.

All the difficulties they had anticipated were however, now superseded, and all the manœuvrings they had designed, rendered quite unnecessary, by the announcement to them, of the intelligence contained in the Countess's note, which Wilson (whose mind was free from the unqualified admiration of nobility which so entirely possessed that of Mrs. Meadows) proclaimed to be the most heartless and malicious production he had ever seen.

Fanny, who could bear her heartfelt distresses with placid composure in solitude, found the effort to restrain her grief, when the subject came to be agitated and discussed, too great for her gentle nature : she burst into a

flood of tears, and rushed from the room in an agony, followed by her dear friend Mrs. Wilson.

Thus left together, Mrs. Meadows and Wilson talked the matter over, and argued and discussed, and reasoned and descanted: but, alas! discussion and arguments, reasonings and descantings, were vain in such an affair. The fact that Merton's wife was alive was an insuperable bar, as the law had said, to his marriage with Fanny. It was not impossible that, under the present circumstances, a divorce might be obtained hereafter; but the process was costly and difficult, its results hazardous; and, moreover, the actual existence of his former wife, even if the forms of Church and State permitted a second marriage, would be a constant subject of distress and uneasiness to poor Fanny, who, her mother was quite certain, never would consent to avail herself of any legal dispensation to succeed to the possession of Merton, during Kate's life.

Thus, then, the case stood: undoubtedly and decidedly the marriage must be postponed until Kate's demise. She was young; and although her health and constitution might

have been seriously impaired by her short career of dissipation and distress, youth, and the careful attention which was now bestowed upon her, would in all probability restore her: indeed, her death was not to be apprehended; nor could Mrs. Meadows consent to place herself or her daughter in such circumstances as might expose them to the imputation of wishing for such an event.

Mrs. Meadows felt deeply and bitterly both for her child and Merton; and therefore, when she came to the determination, which she did, at the close of her conference with Wilson, to put an end to the connexion at once, and definitively and decidedly terminate all farther intercourse between my poor hero and Fanny, she only considered what measures would be the least wounding or irritating to the suffering lovers, and how the eternal separation, which was about to take place between them, could be most delicately and safely brought about.

Wilson was Merton's friend—and a warm one too: he at first protested against a measure so strong and so unqualified as that, which Mrs. Meadows appeared resolved upon taking; but there was so much good sense in what she

said—such an apparent inutility in maintaining an irritating intercourse between the young people, which could not end happily or satisfactorily—so much ground for ill-nature, censure, and ridicule, in an acquaintance so continued—that even *he* was obliged to submit to the cool, clear, and unimpassioned suggestions of ~~the~~ the politic mother, who was deeply and suddenly smitten with the misrepresentations and calumnies evidently produceable by her sanction of such an arrangement as she had no doubt the lovers would suggest; namely, a patient delay till circumstances should favour their union.

•What she added to all her former observations upon the affair was equally reasonable: she remarked, that however decided and strongly desired the separation between Frances and Henry might actually be, still, as all the world knew, hearts were not to be controlled, though hands might; and that therefore these lovers, if they chose to nurse the hopeless passion, were still able in their own breasts to maintain and nourish the affection they then felt. There she added, she had no power, nor should she ever attempt to influence her

daughter by any new proposal, however advantageous; nor should she check or curb the sorrow which she foresaw must have its way: but that her duty to herself and her child rendered it positively necessary that she should preserve her from the imputation of indelicacy and want of feeling, which she was sure she must incur by remaining longer in London, and admitting the visits of Merton.

Wilson was charged to communicate all this to Henry to soothe and console him, with assurances of the continued respect and commiseration of both Mrs. Meadows and her daughter; and to appeal to his own good sense and regard for them, for a justification of the conduct his once intended mother-in-law had been induced to adopt.

Mrs. Meadows farther professed it to be part of her scheme to leave town that day, so that her prudent and parental resolution might not be endangered by a personal appeal from the young people. Bath was the place of destination named in the first instance; but, as the journey was political, it did not appear at all certain that Bath would be finally fixed upon for a settled residence. To go somewhere,

anywhere, was the great object; and, accordingly, Frances was forthwith informed of the decision of her mother, and prepared herself, without a murmur, to take *that* step, which was tantamount to a surrender of all her hopes of earthly happiness.

It was impossible, however, to quit London, which held her heart's lord: it was impossible to give him up for ever, and with him all the brightest prospects of her life, without one last adieu; and when she had heard and admitted the justice of her mother's arguments, which came to her ear softened by words of hope, (which in point of fact Mrs. Meadows used but to soothe her temporarily, and which she intended gradually to destroy at her leisure and as opportunity best suited,) Fanny hastily wrote a few lines to Henry, her eyes flowing with tears, her hand cold and trembling, her heart beating and aching, her head throbbing with agony.

“The hour is at last come, when our wretched fate is decided—we are awakened from a happy dream to certain wretchedness. Honour, principle, justice, and reason demand

the sacrifice which I am called upon to make : I go from you voluntarily—perhaps eternally ; it is right, and I therefore do it cheerfully. That brighter days may be in store for *you*, shall be my constant prayer. *My* doom is sealed : I could not leave you for ever, without one last adieu. God bless you, dearest Henry ! In this world we meet no more : but my heart will be always with you.

“ Your’s eternally,

“ F. M. ”

And so as my reader will perceive, by these few lines the artless, affectionate, devoted Fanny completely defeated and overturned all the well-regulated plans of her manœuvring mother. With this one sad remembrance in his keeping, would Merton’s affection for his beloved ever relax ; would time, or place, or circumstance, change or weaken such a passion ? No ! The end was answered to the eye of the world, and what was due to society was done ; but never were hearts more firmly united than those of Merton and Fanny Meadows on this eventful day.

The moment Wilson communicated his mes-

sage, Henry rushed from his obscure lodgings, half mad with the intelligence he had received, and flew to the hotel once more to entreat, to implore, to explain, to protest; but he reached Berkeley Square just ten minutes after his beloved had quitted it. He found Mrs. Wilson, in tears. The commiseration of the kind-hearted creature soothed him; and he remained riveted, spell-bound, as it were, to the table, at which his Fanny a short time before had been sitting, and whence she had despatched her farewell note, and he lingered on, talking to Wilson and his wife fruitlessly and vainly of all his hopes, his fears, his wishes, and intentions.

Meanwhile Kate continued rapidly to recover; and Henry began to consider what sum would be necessary to place her in a quiet retirement in the country, and consulted thereupon his friend Mr. Sheldwick, who, after expressing his sorrow at the circumstances, and his extreme disgust at the conduct of Lady Castleton, (whose letter to Mrs. Meadows had remained unanswered,) proceeded to enlighten Henry's mind very considerably as to the process of divorce; which extremely elated and cheered my hero, who, by the aid of Mr.

Sheldwick's professional advice, clearly saw an extrication from all his difficulties, through the saving interference of the House of Lords, it seeming to the said Mr. Sheldwick a matter of no great difficulty to procure the desired remedy for his evils, under circumstances so peculiar and painful as those of his case indisputably were.

All these hopes were however killed, when Wilson distinctly told him that any exertions touching this measure would be unavailing, as relating to a consequent marriage with Fanny, because both she and her mother had avowed a determination that she should not enter into any such alliance during the existence of his present wife.

At this he murmured, as it was natural he should, and begged his friend to mediate: but Wilson, true to both parties, declined being the medium of any renewed correspondence, and spoke with (what Henry considered) such unnecessary harshness upon the occasion, that my hero and his friend parted in a manner unusual with them and unsatisfactory in the extreme to both of them.

It is curious to observe, that, under some circumstances, even good-fortune itself is a

source of discontent. Henry, whose fate pervades and characterizes every action and incident of his life, had the pleasure to receive a warm and cordial invitation from Sir Henry Musgrave, immediately on his arrival in London; and the gallant officer not only ratified all Sheldwick's promises, but added ten thousand pounds to the sum stipulated for by that gentleman, thus putting his half-brother into possession of fifty thousand pounds.

At any other time, this certain fortune would have been perfect happiness: at present, neither this, nor the assiduous kindness of his newly-gained relation, could cheer his wretchedness. He resolved, however, to make one effort; and discovering that Mrs. Meadows, having let her villa in Surrey, had taken a residence near the sea in Devonshire, he wrote a long and animated letter to her, entreating that she would relax in her severity towards him; that a divorce *might* be obtained; and that it was cruel and unjust to delay the happiness of two fond lovers, by scruples which were, in point of fact, unimportant, and which every-day occurrences proved to have no weight with society.

He spoke of his unfortunate wife, whose health, though still delicate, was much improved ; stated that he had secured her a quiet retreat at a farm-house, in Bedfordshire, where, in seclusion and solitude, he had hopes that she might lead a life of repentance, and prepare for its termination, with meekness and resignation.

How well Mr. Henry Merton understood the female character, I do not pretend to say ; but when it appears, as it does in this letter, that he expected such a woman as Kate Etherington to renounce all the pomps and vanities of the world, and sink under her misfortunes into the quiet obscurity of a Bedfordshire farm-house, and reconcile herself to the society of rustic twaddlers, by way of substitutes for the “gallant gay Lotharios” who heretofore had swelled the lists of her subjects ; perhaps my reader himself will do me the favour to estimate the extent of his knowledge in that particular.

Whatever might have been his hopes or wishes upon this point, the letter, in which he breathed forth such pious anticipations of his wife’s amendment, had not the effect which he imagined it likely to produce. Mrs. Mea-

dows returned a plain, cold, and determined answer. Frances was extremely unwell; any agitation would increase her illness; and she had not mentioned his appeal to her, because she and her daughter had definitively made up their minds upon the subject, and their resolution was not to be shaken.

Under these circumstances, Henry, affluent and at ease as he was in all worldly matters, remained still the unhappy creature he appeared doomed eternally to be; and hardly knowing what to do, or how to act, accepted the cordial invitation of his half-brother, Sir Henry, to accompany him to Paris; a measure which he the more readily took, because he had heard it rumoured that his friends, and particularly the Meadowses, had been led to believe that he was wavering between his union with Fanny, and the marvellously prudent step of taking Kate back again; a report which his departure from England would materially tend to disprove, and to which nothing had given an air of probability except the attentions he had paid to the unhappy woman during her illness, and which, such was the integral goodness of his heart, he would have

afforded to her grandmother under similar affliction.

In pursuance of this arrangement, my hero quitted town with Sir Henry Musgrave and a friend of his, and crossing the liquid barrier of our happy island, proceeded to the French metropolis, having first duly informed Mrs. Meadows that such was his intention.

This intelligence was received by that lady with surprise, for it appeared to her very like an acquiescence in the arrangement for altogether breaking off the match between Frances and himself, and to which he had at first so stoutly demurred. She did not fail to put this construction on the measure to Frances, who, in the sad state of health in which she was, at the time, saw but too much justice in her mother's apprehensions.

Letters from the Wilsons repeatedly stated that they had seen nothing of Merton, that his manner to Wilson had been full of irritation, that he severely reprobated the over-scrupulousness of his intended, with respect to the divorce, and that the expressions he used were quite of a different character from those which were habitually his own.

These circumstances, transpiring as they did just at the moment of his accession to a comfortable fortune, led both Fanny and her mother to suspect that a change had taken place in his views and intentions, having been perhaps moved thereunto by Sir Henry Musgrave; who, however liberally he might have acted in this last affair, was always associated in Fanny's mind with John Felton of Haversfield, whose friend he had been, in the duel with Charles Fitzpatrick, and who was to have attended him, had he survived, in his meeting with Merton.

The worries and vexations inseparable from the conduct of the lives of my hero and heroine, seemed by no means diminished or dissipated; and such was the nature of their destiny, that good fortune and success only tended to increase their distresses and disasters.

Before Henry's departure, he had arranged the mode of payment of Kate's allowance; and, quite satisfied that he had done his duty by every body, made every effort to reconcile contending interests, and soothe and assuage the evils of others, he breathed the pure and elastic air of Paris with something like tem-

porary satisfaction, and entered into its elegant dissipations, *pour passer le temps*, until events might occur, either to soften the obduracy of Fanny's resolution, or relieve him altogether from the difficulties which at present interposed themselves to his marriage.

CHAPTER XXIII.

At this the parting gloom cleared up apace,
My slumbers soften'd ; and with health return'd
Serenity of mind and order'd thought,
And fair ideas gladdening all the soul."

MY readers will remember that Mrs. Merton is domesticated with the family of the Gubbins's in Bedfordshire, that Miss Frances Meadows is at Exmouth, and that Mr. Henry Merton is in Paris. It does not appear that these persons can long remain stationary at any of those given points.

Fanny's health began most visibly to decline after two or three months' stay in Devonshire : indeed, the alteration in her appearance was so visible to the Wilsons, who paid the Meadowses a visit, that Mrs. Wilson felt it her

duty to arouse the fears of her mother ; for in the constant intercourse between the parent and child, the change and decay (for decay it was) had been so gradual as to be almost imperceptible. To those who came fresh from afar, and after a protracted absence, the operation of time and illness was more strikingly manifest: the eye was sunken and hollow, and the pale cheek, which ever and anon was dashed with the hectic flush, spoke volumes to the affectionate friend of poor Fanny, who, under the sanction of " George," communicated her apprehensions to Mrs. Meadows, that the suffering girl was seriously indisposed.

The tender fears of the fond mother once excited, every look, every sigh was construed into an accession of pain and disorder ; and under specious pretexts, formed so as not to alarm the patient, a physician of eminence in the neighbourhood was called in. He said but little—comforted and assured the sufferer—wrote a prescription for a draft or two, in which the "*aqua pura*" formed a principal ingredient—and retired.

He was followed from the room by Mrs. Meadows, who, first warned to prepare herself

for bad news, heard from his lips the fatal sentence of *death* against her daughter, unless she was immediately removed to a warmer climate. The change, I need hardly say, was instantly decided on; the only doubt was whither to go:—Italy? the South of France? The physician hesitated, and recommended such a change, as might incur the necessity of a somewhat lengthened voyage. Despatch, however, was vitally and essentially necessary; and after a brief consultation, to which Wilson was summoned, it was agreed that Madeira would be the most desirable place of destination, as it would embrace all the advantages which the doctor had pointed out.

The difficulty of the case arose in the mode of communicating to the patient the intention of taking such a voyage, and making such a move, without suffering it to appear that she herself was really the object of the expedition. This, however, was surmounted; for Wilson, whose independent circumstances left him free to rove over the world's wide surface, having hinted his design to his lady, and having ascertained that she would have no objection to an excursion to the island recommended by the doctor, stated after dinner that he had re-

ceived letters from London which would, he thought, compel him to proceed to Madeira, for the purpose of arranging some outstanding debts, with one of the leading mercantile houses there.

Mrs. Wilson *artlessly* protested against his going without her, which produced a well-arranged quarrel. Fanny was referred to, and appealed from; and in this amicable difference, the natural proposal, "Suppose we all go," was made by Mrs. Meadows herself, with as much apparent ingenuousness as if she really had been stricken suddenly with the idea, and made the proposition spontaneously.

Much to their delight, Fanny seemed rather to approve of the plan; and before they retired to rest, the thing was "fixed as fate." Wilson was precisely the man to command such an expedition. He wrote off to town instantly; and by return of post, ascertained that the "Porpoise" free trader to Bengal, with liberty to touch at Madeira and the Cape of Good Hope, was actually on her way, from the river to Portsmouth, to take in her passengers, and would certainly sail in eight days.

It would have been more fortunate if she could have touched at Plymouth; but Wilson

was so pressed for time, that he could not delay his departure for any better opportunity. A letter to Mr. Lindegren flew across the country to Portsmouth. The ship, 620 tons, class A, carrying a surgeon, with capital accommodation, was pointed out—passages secured for the party and their servants ; and in two days more the whole force was in motion.

The innocent lamb, decked in flowers and led to the sacrifice, is not more unconscious of the real object of its progress to the altar, than Fanny was, of the true meaning of these sudden and hasty proceedings.

The rapid journey, the general excitement, the change of air and scenery, had decidedly a beneficial effect upon the poor girl's spirits ; but she was soon wearied, and her weakness became but too evident. The orders, however, of the physician were obeyed. She was not suffered to be alone, nor to speak on unpleasant subjects ; the passing objects were the constant and varying theme of conversation ; and on their arrival at the Clarence Hotel at Portsmouth, the whole expedition appeared like a dream.

Wilson sought and found Mr. Lindegren. The Porpoise was at Spithead,—fine ship—half the round-house disengaged—the master a most respectable man—cargo sundries—to call at Madeira for wine—only five passengers besides themselves—positively sail in two days—never was such an accommodating personage as Captain (as he called *himself*) Crabtree! “Dear me, Sir!” said he, “we’ll make nothing of running up a bulk-head and dividing the cabin for the ladies!—pooh, stuff—don’t mention it.—Lord love your heart, Sir, there’s plenty of room for the servants—dozens of ’em!—Took out Lord Cadwallader, two aides-de-camp, a private secretary, and four housemaids, three years ago—used to the thing. Provisions—psha!—two courses every day, with only one small dish of junk, to swear by—hot rolls every morning: two cows on board—milk, pies, puddings, preserved fruits—sallads growing in the cabin windows—sixty-four dozen of fowls, two hundred and eighty ducks, and the long-boat full of Southdowns.”

All these advantages were enumerated in a breath by Mr. Crabtree, who bore in his coun-

tenance the marks of good living, serving thereby as a sign for his own ship.

Wilson, who received the detail of accommodations with a share of scepticism proportioned to his knowledge of the class of persons with whom he had to deal, was, however, pretty well assured that for so short a voyage they should make it out well enough; and accordingly, having visited the Porpoise, inspected the accommodations, and regaled himself with a basin of hot, salt, greasy, and weak soup, served up in a dull-looking pewter basin, on the cuddy-table, which was covered with rough, shaggy, green baize, and surrounded by sundry rural-looking chairs, such as are to be found in cockney gardens; and having tasted the biscuit, which, by way of novelty, was extremely agreeable; concluded his bargain for the passage with his friend Crabtree, who gave him a cast ashore in his jolly-boat; which, having forcibly assaulted two of the buoys, run foul of a Portsmouth wherry, and escaped capswiveling under the bows of the Ryde Packet, at length reached the Sally Port in safety.

One day passed, and Porpoise made no progress in her preparations for sea; two days,

and then a third expired—still no summons from Mr. Crabtree. Wilson called on him at Mr. Frampton's Hotel, or rather in the cellar under it, where the *Captain* was solacing himself with grog.

"Well, Captain," said Wilson, "when d'ye think of sailing?"

"To-morrow, Sir, 'please God," said the Schipper: "wind's all at sou'-west to-day. I thought it was a-gitting round, about noon—but it's all back again though."

And so the thing went on, till the expiration of a week; when the wind shifting to the "nor'ad o' east," up went Crabtree's blue peter, and away went the ladies to the Porpoise. A little splashing and a good deal of screaming, (for there was a bit of a sea on,) was all the mischief which occurred; for Wilson being acquainted with Captain Snipe, of his Majesty's ship *Peveril*, *his* cutter had the honour of conveying the party alongside of the Porpoise, upon whose deck, besides the boat full of Southdowns, already spoken of, were walking a Major MacCannister of the Madras Cavalry, and his lady—a girl young enough to be his grand-daughter; Doctor Verjuice, a

naval surgeon, going out to join a ship on the Cape station ; and two smoothfaced personages, who were aspirants in the civil service, either of the King or the Company.

Captain Snipe having taken care that the ladies were whipped up, in as unlubber-like a manner as circumstances would admit of, disdained to honour the greasy deck of the Porpoise by going on board of her ; but having gracefully bowed to his fair passengers, bid the cutter's crew give way, and having lectured the youngster who was in the stern-sheets, for sneezing to windward, in half an hour after, appeared walking the quarter-deck of his own beautiful eighteen-gun brig, spinning a yarn to his bald-headed first Lieutenant, and wiggling him in great style, for the way in which Peveril's yards were squared.

Meanwhile it began to blow pretty fresh, and Captain Crabtree took sudden fright at the Needles, and edged away for St. Helens, and long before dark, was clear of the island. Outside there was a bit of a sea, and Porpoise pitched and rolled considerably ; however, the ladies behaved like heroines, and supper was announced in the cuddy.

This was a meal which was intended to do duty for dinner and supper together, and consisted of a lump of junk, a few yellow gerkins in a saucer, and some soft bread. The ladies declined eating ; but Wilson, and Verjuice, the Surgeon, who was on his native element, (as the newspapers call the sea, when a ship, which has never been in the water before, first takes to it), were ravenous ; and more pickles and more bread were the cries of the hungry.

The Navy Surgeon was a peculiar personage ; but, as I shall have the honour hereafter of introducing my readers to him, on another occasion, I shall here touch him but lightly. Mac-Cannister was an old Madras dandy, who, having come to Europe for the benefit of his health, had married a little, laughing, rosy-cheeked, black-eyed, plump Scotch girl, full of fun, alive to the ridiculous, and not very scrupulous in evincing that her partiality for the Major had not blinded her to his little imperfections.

But I have neither time nor space here to dilate upon all the occurrences of the voyage ; the apprehensions of the ladies, when the poultry on the poop began to feed, whose peckings were mistaken for pelting rain ; nor shall I attempt

to make a comparison between the professions and the performances of Crabtree : the innumerable Southdowns in the long-boat were, in truth, a select party of unhealthy ewes, whose only chance of living, long enough to be killed, was a change of air. The cow had died of a decline at Portsmouth, and her place was filled by two goats, which, owing to the unskilfulness or carelessness of one Clark, the master's factotum, turned out to be of the male species, and therefore not at all likely to prove good substitutes for the animal departed.

However, to any thing like complaint, Crabtree assured them, that at Madeira he would get a cow ; and as to the lean kine aboard, he predicted their vast improvement in the course of a few weeks ; information which, however valuable to those who were embarked for the whole voyage, was not so extremely important to others, who were to quit the ship at her first resting-place.

At noon the next day, Start Point bore W. and by N. eleven miles, and blowing fresh. The old Porpoise, most aptly named, had tumbled along thus much of her voyage, without great inconvenience, however she was a bit of a slug ; but as all slugs are, when spoken of by those

who are interested about them, she was an excellent sea-boat.

As I am pressed for time and space, suffice it to say, that before they turned in, the Lizard lights bore N. W. about fifteen miles ; and when they rose, the land was lost to mortal eye. And thus did the Porpoise roll herself into the Bay of Biscay, where, happily meeting with a fresh gale, she tumbled about in such style, that all the ladies suffered extremely, except Mrs. MacCannister, who was laughing like a school-girl at her yellow-faced Major, who voted himself in the agonies of death, and roared as loudly as lungs, which had seen some thirty years service in India, could avail him.

Susan MacCannister was so healthy, and so happy, and so full of tricks, that the young writers were actually not safe from her pranks. She was a wild one and a sweet one, and ingratiated herself with every body round her, except her spouse, who gradually grew angry with her as she became pleasing to every body else: even the sly old surgeon himself endeavoured to persuade her into illness, merely to have the happiness of attending her ; but she was artless, single-hearted, kind and good-

natured, and wild, as she was, as the mountain-doe, was, I verily believe, as innocent as a lamb.

Well, thus they voyaged. On the seventh day they were in latitude 47. 36.—longitude 8. 4.—the wind West and by South—high sea—rainy and uncomfortable weather—the bulkheads ill-fitted, creaked tremendously—the ports were badly caulked, for although Porpoise never meant to fight, she had holes in her sides to look as if she did. Wilson's cabin leaked uncomfortably—the roundhouse was dry, but then boy Jem never lashed the cuddy chairs well before he turned in, and they were sure to fetch-away in the middle of the night; generally two or three chests got adrift on the main-deck, or a hen-coop was canted over on the poop: every half hour something was going; in short, it was not a particularly well-calculated voyage for an invalid.

In the morning of the thirteenth day, however, Porpoise having at noon the day before been in 34. 37. latitude—14. 56. longitude—the wind fresh at N.E.—she made the beautiful island of Madeira.

Never was approach more splendid, more

brilliantly magnificent than this: the redness of the vineyards, budding as they hung on the sides of its cloud-capped mountains—its fertile valleys, studded with snow-white villas—the picturesque city of Funchal, its spired cathedral—the convent of Nuestra Señora del Monte midway up the hill—the bluff Loo-rock in the distance of the harbour—the freshness, the sweetness, the gaiety, the novelty, all together, won the hearts and captivated the eyes of all on board; except Major MacCannister, who hoped the captain would not stay long there, and Surgeon Verjuice, who pronounced it to be the dirtiest, dearest, and dreariest place upon God's earth.

The rapture with which men gaze upon the shore, and inhale the balmy breeze which sweeps over the glowing land, after a voyage, short even as this had been, is like that, inspired by meeting a human being in a desert; and the picturesque beauties of Madeira hold out no promise to the eye, which they do not fulfil to the heart. It is the very empire of hospitality; kindness and liberality are the leading characteristics of its inhabitants; and the names of Gordon, Duff,

Keir, and Blackburn, and doubtlessly others unknown to me, will be associated with the best feelings of affection and gratitude, in the minds of every voyager who has had occasion to touch its favoured shores.

To one of these families was afforded the pleasure of receiving, and initiating into the customs and manners of the place, the party from the Porpoise, who took leave of their Schipper, if not quite satisfied, certainly not altogether displeased, and who parted from the arch and pretty Mrs. MacCannister with regret. To see so much beauty and unsophistication exported under such a supracargo, was really melancholy to those who esteemed her, if not to herself.

Fanny was pleased and amused with all she saw: the swinging palanquin borne by two sturdy natives, the running servant holding the tail of his master's horse as he followed on foot, the large hatted friars, the numerous religious processions, the total change in the appearance of the fruits and other vegetable productions,—for here the African specimens are in full vigour; and, above all, the quiet calmness of the Prado, where the balmy nocturnus

gives out in the shades of evening its Heliothropic odour, delighted while it soothed, and cheered while it surprised, the dear object of the expedition.

Sanguine, indeed, were the hopes and expectations of her anxious friends as to the result of the voyage and *sejour* in the island; and having safely deposited my precious charge in a remarkably pleasant house about two miles from Funchal, at an elevation quite adequate to the certainty of fresh air, I must return for a moment from the heaven-kissing hills of this African garden, to the flat and insipid county which gives its title to the illustrious House of Russell.

Mrs. Merton was at the Gubbinses when the Meadowses left England: at the time they reached Funchal she was again in London, again involved in every dissipation, every luxury vice could offer, or depravity accept. She had been traced to the farm by a man who formerly had attracted her notice: his wealth was unbounded, and his liberality, where the gratification of his own passions was the object, unbounded. He made his offers, and she yielded. The good resolutions formed

upon a sick bed, the hasty repentance where religion was not, all faded from her recollection; and perceiving that her influence over Merton did not extend quite so far as she at one time thought, she spurned contemptuously the allowance of three hundred pounds *per annum*, which he made her; and feeling but too justly that to "go back" was impossible, determined to gratify her vanity, and worse propensities, by launching into the world in a station, which, however unprincipled her career might be, was better suited to her feelings and failings than that, into which she had so unaccountably fallen.

When Henry was informed by Mrs. Gubbins of her flight, he felt a severer pang than he had thought ever again to endure upon her account: he had established her, as he fancied, in comfort and respectability; but a Bedfordshire farm-house was to Kate, what St. Helena was to Buonaparte: she reflected on her former power and attraction, and compared them with the dull monotony of boiled beef and carrots, suet puddings, and great legs of mutton baked with potatoes under them, which, with changes at stated periods, formed the routine of rural

relaxations from the severer duties of reading good books and mending her own clothes; to which pious tasks Mrs. Gubbins, with matronly attention to her spiritual welfare, constantly confined her guest, indulging her, it is true, with her own society, and that sort of conversation in which the pedigree of a cow, or the amiable qualities of a brood of young ducks, forms an interesting feature.

This, I am sure, my reader must see could not last; and when she received a letter full of protestations and professions from Lord Delamere, the world, with all its allurements and fascinations, beamed again before her eyes; and after a very short correspondence, she took advantage of Mrs. Gubbins's absence on domestic affairs in her farm-yard, to fly to my Lord and happiness, which were waiting her, in his lordship's travelling carriage at the end of the lane.

One determination Henry now came to, which not only his friends, but, as it turned out eventually, the Irish peer himself, was most anxious he should put in force; which was reviving the matter of the divorce, the difficulties in the way of which, were pointed

out to be much fewer and infinitely less important than, when he was poor and without the means of paying for good legal advice, he had been led to believe them.

In order to carry on the necessary proceedings, my hero returned to London, and, under the direction of his excellent friend Sheldwick, and after much trouble, and the exercise of a vast deal of that Christian virtue called patience, the great end was achieved, the divorce was concluded, and Henry once more declared a free man.

The moment the law sanctioned the event, my Lord Delamere proclaimed his good sense, and consummated the perfection of his respectability, by marrying Miss Kate Etherington, at the parish-church of St. James in Piccadilly.

With that sort of prudence for which the fair and frail one under discussion was ever celebrated, she discovered that the Continent was the only scene of action for her in her new capacity; and the glittering coronet having now settled on her brow, and she, by virtue of her husband's patent, having obtained precedence of my Lady Castleton, launched into all

the extravagances of fashion, and moved across the Continent from Paris to Rome, having in her train every thing that was handsome and agreeable in the shape of man.

Lady Delamere's banquets were reported in the London newspapers—Lady Delamere's influence with a certain cardinal was the theme of universal conversation—Lady Delamere patronized artists—Lady Delamere brought forward singers ; in short, by dint of persevering assurance, and that pertinacious adherence to a favourite scheme by which she had gained her title, she at length began to be received in certain circles of Continental society ; and when she was at Naples, several Lord-loving English families, who attributed all her former misfortunes to the villany and neglect of her husband, actually proclaimed her to the world, a creature all soul and mind, and all enthusiasm ; very odd, very eccentric—but with such su heart !

There was only one English lady of our acquaintance at Naples, who positively refused to visit her, upon any consideration whatever ; and that was Mrs. Colonel Rushbrook, who formerly was, as my reader may recollect, Miss

Mary Graham of Haversfield : but, then, *she* was uncommonly particular.

When Henry heard of this surprising alteration in Kate's circumstances, and discovered that she had at length applied her influential and fascinating manners to an available purpose, he argued and reasoned with his half-brother upon the difference which the event would naturally make upon the decision of the Meadowses touching his marriage with Fanny.

It might have been indelicate, it might have caused remarks, (although he never admitted that possibility to the same extent as the Meadowses,) if he had united himself to another, while his former wife remained single and in comparative distress; but now that the result of the divorce had been her elevation, and that her splendid career proclaimed her utter carelessness of all former ties, there could be no objection, (at least none which ought to be valid,) to the union of her late husband with his beloved.

Kate wrote from Ireland, before the divorce had been obtained, a letter to Henry, full of honied words; for she could soothe and flatter, and write sentiment in the most delicate

and regularly unintelligible hand by the page-full. She acknowledged his kindness, spoke with gratitude of his care and attention, and, dwelling strongly on the impossibility of her ever retrieving herself in society, justified the step she had taken, commending to his care and protection the amiable plebeians at the farm, whose excellence and morality she could not but admire, however little disposed she might have been to imitate their example.

Good fortune seemed at this period of Henry's life to crown every undertaking, and the Fates appeared anxious to make amends for past distress, by evincing in the most extraordinary manner the change of his destiny. It will hardly be believed, that he actually discovered the holder and receiver of his moiety of the Twenty Thousand Pounds prize. He turned out to be a gentleman who, having found the pocket-book, inquired the fate of the surket it contained, received the amount, and as compelled to start for the West Indies on the same day.

On his return, he took the earliest opportunity of advertising the facts in the newspapers; and Henry succeeded in establishing

his claim to the property, which was actually paid into his banker's, deducting only therefrom a certain sum, which my hero appropriated to the purchase of a splendid piece of plate to the finder and *refunder*!

Flushed with success, and free from all cares, save one—the anxiety to possess his adored girl—Henry, who had been apprised of the expedition of the Meadowses to Madeira, but who attributed it entirely to the business which Wilson had every where mentioned, as the cause of it, determined instantly to proceed to that island, furnishing himself with newspapers and other *authentic* documents, in which the proceedings of my Lady Delamere were set forth and described in all the vivid imagery of the diurnal writers, founding upon these reports and representations his claim to the hand of Fanny, and to an alteration in the decision to which she and her mother had previously com-

His good luck, however, seemed to favour him even here; for, on the very evening preceding the day when he was to conclude his arrangements for his voyage, he read in the newspaper the account of the arrival of Mrs.

Meadows and family at Thomas's Hotel from Madeira.

"Joy, joy, dear Musgrave!" said the elated Henry to his half-brother; "they are come!—actually arrived in London! How many minutes will elapse before I behold my own, irrevocably mine—my Fanny?"

Musgrave was delighted to see the countenance which had ever been clouded with care, dressed in the bright smiles of joy and happiness. Still, however, he recommended caution. The feelings of women are strong, their emotions violent: the sudden surprise might be too much for a delicate girl, who was unaccustomed to behold her lover in such spirits, and under such favourable circumstances.

Henry, however, was resolute—determined. She was free from all affectation—she might blush and weep, perhaps be agitated; but then, he would soothe her alarm—and the *éclat*, the surprise, were every thing.

Accordingly the enthusiastic lover left Musgrave's lodgings, half wild with ecstasy. To be sure, he *was* an enviable personage; with a handsome fortune, perfectly unencumbered,

freed from the trammels in which he had been so long and so unhappily entangled, conscious that he had done his duty by his former wife, whose subsequent conduct had pretty strongly declared her real character and disposition ; without one care but for Fanny, and she—the identical she—within an hundred yards of him.

To describe his feelings would be a vain attempt, or to enumerate the endless visions of joy which flitted before his eyes, as he flew along Bruton-street : his adored, devoted, faithful fair one would fly to his arms, and her mother bestow her benediction upon them ; the Wilsons, no doubt, would be there—such events ! such an evening ! and then he should return and introduce Sir Henry to them : and then, and then—and so he went on, till he reached the door of the hotel.

Arrived there, he waited for nothing—every body knew him. “Mrs. Meadows here?” The waiter endeavoured to speak—but in vain : “Which room?” was all that Henry offered by way of explanation ; and bounding up the stairs, outstripping the breathless servant, to whose attention something like a speech, he did not pay the smallest attention, my hero

burst open the door of the apartment which Mrs. Meadows always occupied when in the house, and beheld—that lady, Mrs. Wilson and her husband, and a fourth person, to him unknown.

A shriek of horror from Mrs. Meadows was all his welcome.

“Good God!” exclaimed Mrs. Wilson, as she caught the wretched fainting woman in her arms.

Wilson started from his seat, and seized Merton by the hand: the stranger rose from his chair, and rang for assistance for Mrs. Meadows.

“How terrible this is!” said Wilson. “Why, why, did you come to night?”

“Where is Fanny?” faltered out Merton, who saw that the whole party were in the deepest mourning.

Where indeed?

They had that day laid her in the cold grave.—The damp dew of death was on her cheek, and the living were trampling on the green turf over her!

Wilson forced his unwilling friend to the room. In a few sad minutes the truth was told:—she had fallen a victim to sor-

row and to sickness ; her loved remains had been brought home from Madeira ; and the venerable man who was there, had that day breathed the last prayers over them.

Henry burst from Wilson, and rushed like a madman out of the house.

“ Follow Mr. Merton,” said Wilson to the persons who were in the hall below.

“ Poor gentleman,” said Mrs. Meadows’s butler, “ I fear it will be the death of him !”

Wilson, who had caught up his hat, rushed out after him.

“ I said it would never come to good, from the first,” added the man : “ luck has been ever against him, and ‘ luck’s all’ in this world.”

“ Ay,” rejoined his companion, with a shake of the head, “ so true it is, that ‘ THERE’S MANY A SLIP ’TWIXT THE CUP AND THE LIP.’ ”

MARTHA, THE GYPSY.

MARTHA, THE GYPSY.

——— These midnight hags
By force of potent spells, of bloody characters
And conjurations horrible to hear,
Call fiends and spectres from the yawning deep,
And set the ministers of hell at work.

LONDON may appear an unbecoming scene for a story so romantic as that, which I have here set down : but, strange and wild as is the tale I have to tell, *it is true* ; and therefore the scene of action shall not be changed ; nor will I alter nor vary from the truth, save that the names of the personages in my domestic drama shall be fictitious.

To say that I am superstitious would be, in the minds of many wise personages, to write myself down an ass ; but to say that I do not believe

that which follows, as I am sure it was believed by *him* who related it to me, would be to discredit the testimony of a friend, as honourable and brave as ever trod the earth. He has been snatched from the world, of which he was a bright ornament, and has left more than his sweet suffering widow and his orphan children, affectionately to deplore his loss.

It is, I find, right and judicious most carefully and publicly, to disavow a belief in supernatural visitings; but it will be long before I become either so wise or so bold as to make any such unqualified declaration. I am not weak enough to imagine myself surrounded by spirits and phantoms, or jostling through a crowd of spectres, as I walk the streets; neither do I give credence to all the idle tales of ancient dames, or frightened children, touching such matters: but when I breathe the air, and see the grass grow under my feet, I cannot but feel that *He* who gives me power to inhale the one, or stand erect upon the other, has also the power to use for special purposes such means and agency, as he, in

his wisdom may see fit; and which, in point of fact, are not more incomprehensible to us, than the very simplest effects which we every day witness, arising from unknown causes.

Philosophers may pore, and in the might of their littleness, and the erudition of their ignorance, develope and disclose, argue and discuss; but when the sage, who sneers at the possibility of ghosts, will explain to me the doctrine of attraction and gravitation, or tell me why the wind blows, why the tides ebb and flow, or why the light shines—effects perceptible by all men—then will I admit the justice of his incredulity—then will I join the ranks of the incredulous.—However, a truce with *my* views and reflections: proceed we to the narrative.

In the vicinity of Bedford-square lived a respectable and honest man, whose name the reader will be pleased to consider, Harding. He had married early; his wife was an exemplary woman; and his son and daughter were grown into that companionable age, at which children repay, with their society and accomplishments, the tender cares which parents bestow upon their offspring in their early infancy.

Mr. Harding held a responsible and respectable situation under the Government, in an office in Somerset House. His income was adequate to all his wants and wishes; his family was a family of love; and perhaps, taking into consideration the limited desires of what may be fairly called middling life, no man was ever more contented, or better satisfied with his lot, than he.

Maria Harding, his daughter, was a modest, unassuming, and interesting girl, full of feeling and gentleness. She was timid and retiring; but the modesty which cast down her fine black eyes, could not veil the intellect which beamed in them. Her health was by no means strong; and the paleness of her cheek—too frequently, alas! lighted by the hectic flush of our indigenous complaint—gave a deep interest to her countenance. She was watched and reared by her tender mother, with all the care and attention which a being so delicate and so ill-suited to the perils and troubles of this world demanded.

George, her brother, was a bold and intelligent lad, full of rude health and fearless inde-

pendence. His character was frequently the subject of his father's contemplation; and he saw in his disposition, his mind, his pursuits, and propensities, the promise of future success in active life.

With these children, possessing as they did the most enviable characteristics of their respective sexes, Mr. and Mrs. Harding, with thankfulness to Providence, acknowledged their happiness, and their perfect satisfaction with the portion assigned to them in this transitory world.

Maria was about nineteen, and had, as was natural, attracted the regards, and thence gradually chained the affections, of a distant relative, whose ample fortune, added to his personal and mental good qualities, rendered him a most acceptable suitor to her parents, which Maria's heart silently acknowledged he would have been to *her*, had he been poor and pennyless.

The father of this intended husband of Maria was a man of importance, possessing much personal interest, through which, George, the brother of his intended daughter-in-law, was

to be placed in that diplomatic seminary in Downing-street, whence, in due time, he was to rise through all the grades of office, (which, with his peculiar talents, his friends, and especially his mother, was convinced he would so ably fill,) and at last turn out an ambassador, as mighty, and mysterious as my Lord Belmont, of whom I have had occasion to speak in another part of this collection of narratives.

The parents, however, of young Langdale and of Maria Harding were agreed, that there was no necessity for hastening the alliance between their families, seeing that the united ages of the couple did not exceed thirty-nine years; and seeing, moreover, that the elder Mr. Langdale, for private reasons of his own, wished his son to attain to the age of twenty-one before he married; and seeing, moreover still, that Mrs. Langdale, who was little more than six-and-thirty years of age herself, had reasons, which she also meant to be private, for seeking to delay as much as possible, a ceremony, the result of which, in all probability, would confer upon her, somewhat too early in life to be agreeable to a lady of her habits and propensities, the formidable title of grandmamma.

How curious it is, when one takes up a *little bit* of society, (as a geologist crumbles and twists a bit of earth in his hand, to ascertain its character and quality,) to look into the motives and manœuvrings of all the persons connected with it; the various workings, the indefatigable labours, which all their little minds are undergoing to bring about divers and sundry little points, perfectly unconnected with the great end in view; but which, for private and hidden objects, each of them is toiling to carry. Nobody, but those who really understood Mrs. Langdale, understood why she so readily acquiesced in the desire of her husband to postpone the marriage for another twelvemonth. A stranger would have seen only the dutiful wife according with the sensible husband; but I knew her, and knew that there must be more than met the eye, or the ear, in that sympathy of feeling between her and Mr. Langdale, which was not upon ordinary occasions so evidently displayed.

Like the waterman who pulls one way and looks another, Mrs. Langdale aided the entreaties and seconded the commands of her loving spouse, touching the seasonable delay of which

I am speaking; and it was agreed, that immediately after the coming of age of Frederick Langdale, and not before, he was to lead to the hymeneal altar the delicate and timid Maria Harding.

The affair got whispered about; George's fortune in life was highly extolled—Maria's excessive happiness prophesied by every body of their acquaintance; and already had sundry younger ladies, daughters and nieces of those who discussed these matters in divan after dinner, begun to look upon poor Miss Harding with envy and maliciousness, and wonder what Mr. Frederick Langdale could see in her: she was proclaimed to be insipid, inanimate, shy, bashful, and awkward; nay, some went so far as to discover that she was absolutely awry.

Still, however, Frederick and Maria went loving on; and their hearts grew as one; so truly, so fondly were they attached to each other. George, who was somewhat of a plague to the pair of lovers, was luckily at Oxford, reading away till his head ached, to qualify himself for a degree, and the distant duties of

the office whence he was to cull bunches of diplomatic laurels, and whence were to issue rank and title, and ribands and crosses innumerable.

Things were in this prosperous state, the bark of life rolling gaily along before the breeze, when Mr. Harding was one day proceeding from his residence, to his office in Somerset-place, and in passing along Charlotte-street, Bloomsbury, was accosted by one of those female gypsies who are found begging in the streets of the metropolis, and especially in the particular part of the town in question: "Pray remember poor Martha the gypsy," said the woman: "give me a halfpenny for charity, Sir."

Mr. Harding was a subscriber to the Mendicity Society, an institution which proposes to check beggary by the novel mode of giving nothing to the poor: moreover, he was a magistrate—moreover, he had no change; and he desired the woman to go about her business.

All availed him nothing; she still followed him, and reiterated the piteous cry, "Pray remember poor Martha the gypsy."

At length, irritated by the perseverance of the woman—for even subordinates in Government hate to be solicited importunately—Mr. Harding, contrary to his usual custom, and contrary to the customary usages of modern society, turned hastily round and fulminated an oath against the supplicating vagrant.

“Curse!” said Martha: “have I lived to this? Hark ye, man—poor, weak, haughty man! Mark me—look at me!”

He did look at her; and beheld a countenance on fire with rage. A pair of eyes blacker than jet, and brighter than diamonds, glared like stars upon him; her black hair dishevelled, hung over her olive cheeks; and a row of teeth whiter than the snow displayed themselves from between a pair of coral lips, in a dreadful smile, a ghastly sneer of contempt which mingled in her passion. Harding was riveted to the spot; and, what between the powerful fascination of her superhuman countenance, and the dread of a disturbance, he paused to listen to her.

“Mark me, Sir,” said Martha; “you and I shall meet again. Thrice shall you see me be-

fore you die. My visitings will be dreadful ; but the third will be the last !”

There was a solemnity in this appeal which struck to his heart, coming as it did, only from a vagrant outcast. Passengers were approaching ; and wishing, he knew not why, to soothe the ire of the angry woman, he mechanically drew from his pocket some silver, which he tendered to her.

“ There, my good woman—there,” said he, stretching forth his hand.

“ Good woman !” retorted the hag. “ Money now ? I—I that have been cursed ? ’tis all too late, proud gentleman—the deed is done. ~~the~~ curse be now on you.” Saying which, she tossed her ragged red ~~cloak~~ across her shoulder, and hurried from his sight, across the street by the side of the Chapel, into the recesses of St. Giles’s.

Harding felt a most extraordinary sensation : he felt grieved that he had spoken so harshly to the poor creature, and returned his shillings to his pocket with regret. Of course fear of the fulfilment of her predictions did not mingle with any of his feelings on the occasion ; and

he proceeded to his office in Somerset-place, and performed all the official duties of reading the opposition newspapers, discussing the leading politics of the day with the head of another department, and of signing his name three times, before four o'clock.

Martha the gypsy, however, although he had *poohpoohed* her out of his memory, would ever and anon flash across his mind; her figure was indelibly stamped upon his recollection; and though, of course, as I before said, a man of his firmness and intellect could care nothing, one way or another, for the maledictions of an ignorant, illiterate being like a gypsy, still his feelings—whence arising I know not—prompted him to call a hackney-coach, and proceed *en voiture* to his house, rather than run the risk of encountering the metropolitan sibyl, under whose forcible denunciation he was actually labouring.

There is a period in each day of the lives of married people, at which, I am given to understand, a more than ordinarily unreserved communication of facts and feelings takes place; when all the world is shut out, and the two

beings, who are in truth but only one, commune together freely and fully upon the occurrences of the past day. At this period, the else sacred secrets of the drawing-room coterie, and the *tellable* jokes of the after-dinner convivialists, are mutually interchanged by the fond pair, who, by the barbarous customs of uncivilized Britain, have been separated during part of the preceding evening.

Then it is, that the husband informs his anxious consort how he has forwarded his worldly views with such a man—how he has carried his point in such a quarter—what he thinks of the talents of one, of the character of another; while the communicative wife gives *her* view of the same subjects, founded upon what she has gathered from the individuals composing the female cabinet, and explains why she thinks he must have been deceived upon this point, or misled upon that. And thus, in recounting, in arguing, in discussing and descanting, the blended interests of the happy pair are strengthened, their best hopes nourished, and, perhaps, eventually realized.

A few friends at dinner, and some refreshers

in the evening, had prevented Harding from saying a word to his beloved Eliza about the Gipsy; and perhaps, till the "witching time" which I have attempted to define, he would not have mentioned the occurrence even had they been alone. Most certainly he did not think the less of the horrible vision; and when the company had dispersed, and the affectionate couple had retired to rest, he stated the circumstance exactly as it had occurred, and received from his fair lady just such an answer as a prudent, intelligent, and discreet woman of sense would give to such a communication. She vindicated his original determination not to be imposed upon—wondered at his subsequent willingness to give, to such an undeserving object, while he had three or four soup-tickets in his pocket—was somewhat surprised that he had not consigned the bold intruder to the hands of the beadle—and, ridiculing the impression which the hag's appearance seemed to have made upon her husband's mind, narrated a tour performed by herself with some friends to Norwood, when she was a girl, and when one of those very women had told

her fortune, not one word of which ever came true—and, in a discussion of some length, animadverting strongly upon the weakness and impiety of putting faith in the sayings of such creatures, she fell fast asleep.

Not so Harding : he was restless and worried, and felt that he would give the world to be able to recall the curse which he had rashly uttered against the poor woman. Helpless as she was, and in distress, why did his passion conquer his judgment ? Why did he add to the bitterness of refusal the sting of malediction ? However, it was useless to regret *that* which was past—and, wearied and mortified with his reflections, he at length followed his better half into that profound slumber, which the length and subject of his harangue had so comfortably ensured her.

The morning came, and brightly beamed the sun—that is, as brightly as it can beam in London. The office hour arrived ; and Mr. Harding proceeded, *not* by Charlotte-street, to Somerset House, such was his dread of seeing the ominous woman. It is quite impossible to describe the effect produced upon him by the

apprehension of encountering her: if he heard a female voice behind him in the street, he trembled, and feared to look round, lest he should behold Martha. In turning a corner he proceeded carefully and cautiously, lest he should come upon her, unexpectedly; in short, wherever he went, whatever he did, his actions, his movements, his very words, were controlled and constrained by the horror of beholding her again.

The words she had uttered rang incessantly in his ears; nay, such possession had they taken of him, that he had written them down and sealed the document which contained them. "Thrice shall you see me before you die. My visitings will be dreadful; but the third will be the last."

"Calais" was not imprinted more deeply on our Queen's heart, than these words, upon that of Harding; but he was ashamed of the strength of his feelings, and placed the paper wherein he had recorded them, at the very bottom of his desk.

Meanwhile Frederick Langdale was unremitting in his attentions to Maria; but, as is too

often the case, the bright sunshine of their loves was clouded. Her health, always delicate, now appeared still more so, and at times her anxious parents felt a solicitude upon her account, new to them; for symptoms of consumption had shewn themselves, which the faculty, although they spoke of them lightly to the fond mother and to the gentle patient, treated with such care and caution, as gave alarm to those, who could see the progress of the fatal disease, which was unnoticed by Maria herself, who anticipated parties and pleasure and gaieties in the coming spring, which the Doctors thought it but too probable she might never enjoy.

That Mr. Langdale's *punctilio*, or Mrs. Langdale's excessive desire for apparent juvenility, should have induced the postponement of Maria's marriage was, indeed, a melancholy circumstance. The agitation, the surprise, the hope deferred, which weighed upon the sweet girl's mind, and that doubting dread of something unexpected, which lovers always feel, bore down her spirits and injured her health; whereas, had the marriage been celebrated, the relief she would have experienced from all her

apprehensions, added to the tour of France and Italy, which the happy couple were to take immediately after their union, would have restored her to health, while it ensured her happiness. This, however, was not to be.

It was now some three months since poor Mr. Harding's rencontre with Martha; and habit, and time, and constant avocation had conspired to free his mind from the dread she at first inspired. Again he smiled and joked, again he enjoyed society, and again dared to take the nearest road to Somerset House; nay, he had so far recovered from the unaccountable terror he had originally felt, that he went to his desk, and selecting the paper wherein he had set down the awful denunciation of the hag, deliberately tore it into bits, and witnessed its destruction in the fire, with something like real satisfaction, and a determination never more to think upon so silly an affair.

Frederick Langdale was, as usual, with his betrothed, and Mrs. Harding enjoying the egotism of the lovers; (for, as I said before, lovers think their conversation the most charming in the world, because they talk of nothing but themselves,) when his curricie was driven

up to the door to convey him to Tattersall's, where his father had commissioned him to look at a horse, or horses, which he intended to purchase; and Frederick was, of all things in the world, the best possible judge of a horse.

To this sweeping dictum, Mr. Harding, however, was not willing to assent; and therefore, in order to have the full advantage of two heads which, as the proverb says, are better than one, the worthy father-in-law elect proposed accompanying the youth to the auctioneers at Hyde-Park-Corner, it being one of those few privileged days when the labourers in our public offices make holiday. The proposal was hailed with delight by the young man, who, in order to shew due deference to his elder friend, gave the reins to Mr. Harding, and bowing their adieux to the ladies at the window, away they went, the splendid cattle of Mr. Langdale prancing and curvetting, fire flaming from their eyes, and smoke breathing from their nostrils.

The elder gentleman soon found that the horses were somewhat beyond his strength, even putting his skill wholly out of the question, and in turning into Russell-street, pro-

posed giving the reins to Frederick. By some misunderstanding of words in the alarm which Harding felt, Frederick did not take the reins which he (perfectly confounded) tendered to him. They slipped over the dashing iron between the horses, who thus freed from restraint, reared wildly in the air, and plunging forward dashed the vehicle against a post, and precipitated Frederick and Harding on the curb-stone: the off-horse kicked desperately as the carriage became entangled and impeded, and struck Frederick a desperate blow on the head. Harding, whose right arm and collar-bone were broken, raised himself on his left hand, and saw Frederick weltering in blood apparently lifeless before him. The infuriated animals again plunged forward with the shattered remnant of the carriage, and as this object was removed from his sight, the wretched father-in-law beheld, looking upon the scene with a fixed and an unmoved countenance—

MARTHA THE GYPSY.

It was doubtful whether the appearance of this horrible vision, coupled as it was with the verification of her prophecy, had not a more dreadful effect upon Mr. Harding than the sad

reality before him. He trembled, sickened, fainted, and fell senseless on the ground.

Assistance was promptly procured, and the wounded sufferers were carefully removed to their respective dwellings. Frederick Langdale's sufferings were much greater than those of his companion, and in addition to severe fractures of two of his limbs, the wound upon the head presented a most terrible appearance, and excited the greatest alarm in his medical attendants.

Mr. Harding, whose temperate course of life was greatly advantageous to his case, had suffered comparatively little: a simple fracture of the arm and dislocation of the collar-bone, (which was the extent of his misfortune,) were, by skilful treatment and implicit obedience to professional commands, soon pronounced in a state of improvement; but a wound had been inflicted which no doctor could heal. The conviction that the woman, whose anger he had incurred, had, if not the power of producing evil, at least a prophetic spirit, and that he had twice again to see her before the fulfilment of her prophecy, struck deep into his mind: and although he felt himself more

at ease when he had communicated to Mrs. Harding the fact of having seen the Gypsy at the moment of the accident, it was impossible for him to rally from the shock which his nerves had received. It was in vain he tried to shake off the perpetual apprehension of again beholding her.

Frederick Langdale remained for some time in a very precarious state. All visitors were excluded from his room, and a wretched space of two months passed, during which his affectionate Maria had never been allowed to see him, nor to write to, nor to hear from him. While her constitution, like that of my poor Fanny Meadows, was gradually giving way to the constant operation of solicitude and sorrow.

Mr. Harding meanwhile recovered rapidly, but his spirits did not keep pace with his mending health: the dread he felt of quitting his house, the tremor excited in his breast by a knocking at the door, or the approach of a footstep, lest the intruder should be the basilisk Martha, were not to be described; and the appearance of his poor Maria did not tend to dissipate the gloom which hung over his mind.

When Frederick at length was sufficiently recovered to receive visitors, Maria was not sufficiently well to visit him: she was too rapidly sinking into an early grave, and even the physician himself appeared desirous of preparing her parents for the worst, while she, full of the symptomatic prospectiveness of the disease, talked anticipately of future happiness, when Frederick would be sufficiently re-established to visit her.

At length, however, the doctors suggested a change of air—a suggestion instantly attended to, but alas! too late; the weakness of the poor girl was such, that upon a trial of her strength it was found inexpedient to attempt her removal.

In this terrible state, separated from *him* whose all she was, did the exemplary patient linger, and life seemed flickering in her flushing cheek; and her eye was sunken and her parched lip quivered with pain.

It was at length agreed, that on the following day Frederick Langdale might be permitted to visit her:—his varied fractures were reduced, and the wound on the head had assumed a favourable appearance. The carriage was or-

dered to convey him to the Hardings at once, and the physician advised by all means, that Maria should be apprized of and prepared for the meeting, the day previous to its taking place. Those who are parents, and those alone, will be able to understand the tender solicitude, the wary caution with which both her father and mother proceeded in a disclosure, so important as the medical men thought, to her recovery—so careful that the coming joy should be imparted gradually to their suffering child, and that all the mischiefs resulting from an abrupt announcement should be avoided.

They sat down by her—spoke of Frederick—Maria joined in the conversation—raised herself in her bed—by degrees, hope was excited that she might soon again see him—this hope was gradually improved into certainty—the period at which it might occur spoken of—that period again progressively diminished: the anxious girl caught the whole truth—she knew it—she was conscious that she should behold him on the morrow—she burst into a flood of tears and sank down upon her pillow.

At that moment the bright sun, which was shining in all its splendour, beamed into the

room, and fell strongly upon her flushed countenance.

“Draw the blind down, my love,” said Mrs. Harding to her husband. Harding rose and proceeded to the window.

A shriek of horror burst from him—“She is there!” exclaimed he.

“Who?” cried his astonished wife.

“She—she—the horrid she!”

Mrs. Harding ran to the window and beheld on the opposite side of the street, with her eyes fixed attentively on the house—MARTHA, THE GYPSY.

“Draw down the blind, my love, and come away; pray come away,” said Mrs. Harding.

Harding drew down the blind.

“What evil is at hand?” sobbed the agonized man.

A loud scream from Mrs. Harding, who had returned to the bed-side, was the horrid answer to his painful questions.

Maria was dead!

Twice of the thrice had he seen this dreadful fiend in human shape; each visitation was (as she had foretold) to surpass the preceding

one, in its importance of horror.—What could surpass this?

Before the afflicted parents lay their innocent child stretched in the still sleep of death; neither of them believed it true—it seemed like a horrid dream. Harding was bewildered, and turned from the corpse of his beloved, to the window he had just left. Martha was gone—and he heard her singing a wild and joyous air at the other end of the street.

The servants were summoned—medical aid was called in—but it was all too late! and the wretched parents were doomed to mourn their loved, their lost Maria. George, her fond and affectionate brother, who was at Oxford, hastened from all the academic honours which were waiting him, to follow to her grave his beloved sister.

The effect upon Frederick Langdale was most dreadful, it was supposed that he would never recover from a shock so great, and at the moment so unexpected; for, although the delicacy of her constitution was a perpetual source of uneasiness and solicitude, still the immediate symptoms had taken rather a favourable turn during the last few days of her

life, and had re-invigorated the hopes which those who so dearly loved her, entertained of her eventual recovery. Of this distressed young man I never indeed heard any thing, till about three years after, when I saw it announced in the papers that he was married to the only daughter of a rich west-country baronet, which, if I wanted to work out a proverb here, would afford me a most admirable opportunity of doing so.

The death of poor Maria, and the dread which her father entertained of the third visitation of Martha, made the most complete change in the affairs of the family. By the exertion of powerful interest, he obtained an appointment for his son to act as his deputy in the office which he held, and having achieved this desired object, resolved on leaving England for a time, and quitting a neighbourhood where he must be perpetually exposed to the danger which he was now perfectly convinced was inseparable from his next interview with the weird woman.

George, of course, thus checked in his classical pursuits, left Oxford, and at the early age of nineteen commenced active official life, not certainly in the particular department which

his mother had selected for his *début* ; and it was somewhat observable, that the Langdales after the death of Maria, not only abstained from frequent intercourse with the Hardings during their stay in England, but that the mighty professions of the purse-proud citizen dwindled by degrees into an absolute forgetfulness of any promise, even conditional, to exert an interest for their son.

Seeing this, Mr. Harding felt that he should act prudentially, by endeavouring to place his son, where, in the course of time, he might perhaps attain to that situation, from whose honourable revenue he could live like a gentleman and “ settle comfortably.”

All the arrangements which the kind father had proposed being made, the mourning couple proceeded on a lengthened tour of the Continent; and it was evident that his spirits mended rapidly when he felt conscious that his liability to encounter Martha was decreased. The sorrow of mourning was soothed and softened in the common course of Nature, and the quiet domesticated couple sat themselves down at Lausanne, “ the world forgetting, by the world forgot,” except by their excellent and

exemplary son, whose good qualities, it seems, had captivated a remarkably pretty girl, a neighbour of his, whose mother appeared to be equally charmed with the goodness of his income.

There appeared, strange to say, in this affair, no difficulties to be surmounted, no obstacles to be overcome; and the consent of the Hardings (requested in a letter, which also begged them to be present at the ceremony, if they were willing it should take place,) was presently obtained by George; and at the close of the second year, which had passed since their departure, the parents and son were again united in that house, the very sight of which recalled to their recollection their poor unhappy daughter and her melancholy fate, and which was still associated most painfully in the mind of Mr. Harding with the hated Gypsy.

The charm however had, no doubt, been broken. In the two past years Martha was doubtless either dead, or gone from the neighbourhood. They were a wandering tribe—and thus Mrs. Harding checked the rising apprehensions and renewed uneasiness of her husband; and so well did she succeed, that when the wedding-day came, and the bells rang and

the favours fluttered in the air, his countenance was lighted with smiles, and he kissed the glowing cheek of his new daughter-in-law with warmth, and something like happiness.

The wedding took place at that season of the year when friends and families meet jovially and harmoniously, when all little bickerings are forgotten, and when, by a general feeling founded upon religion and perpetuated by the memory of the blessing granted to the world by the Almighty, an universal amnesty is proclaimed; when the cheerful fire, and the teeming board announce that Christmas is come, and mirth and gratulation are the order of the day.

It unfortunately happened, however, that to the account of Miss Wilkinson's marriage with George Harding, I am not permitted, in truth, to add that they left town in a travelling carriage and four, to spend the honey-moon. Three or four days permitted absence from his office alone were devoted to the celebration of the nuptials, and it was agreed that the whole party, together with the younger branches of the Wilkinsons', their cousins and second

cousins, &c. should meet on twelfth-night to celebrate in a juvenile party, the return of the bride and bridegroom to their home.

When that night came it was delightful to see the happy faces of the smiling youngsters : it was a pleasure to behold *them* pleased—a participation in which, since the highest amongst us, and the most accomplished prince in Europe annually evinces the gratification he feels in such sights, I am by no means disposed to disclaim. And merry was the jest, and gaily did the evening pass ; and Mr. Harding, surrounded by his youthful guests, smiled, and for a season forgot his care : yet, as he glanced round the room he could not suppress a sigh, when he recollected that in that very room his darling Maria had entertained her little parties on the anniversary of the same day in former years.

Supper was announced early, and the gay throng bounded down stairs to the parlour, where an abundance of the luxuries of middling life crowded the board. In the centre appeared the great object of the feast—a huge twelfth-cake, and gilded kings and queens, stood

lingering over circles of scarlet sweetmeats, and hearts of sugar lay enshrined with warlike trophies of the same material.

Many and deep were the wounds the mighty cake received, and every guest watched with a deep anxiety the coming portion, relatively to the glittering splendour with which its frosted surface was adorned. Character-cards, illustrated with pithy mottoes and quaint sayings, were distributed; and by one of those little frauds which such societies tolerate, Mr. Harding was announced as king, and the new bride as queen; and there was such charming joking, and such harmless merriment abounding, that he looked to his wife with an expression of content, which she had often but vainly sought to find upon his countenance since the death of his dear Maria.

Supper concluded, the clock struck twelve, and the elders looked as if it were time for the young ones to depart. One half-hour's grace was begged for by the "King," and granted; and Mrs. George Harding on this night was to sing them a song about "poor old maidens"—an ancient quaintness, which by custom and usage

ever since she was a little child she had annually *performed* upon this anniversary ; and, accordingly, the promise being claimed, silence was obtained, and she, with all that shew of tucker-heaving diffidence which is so becoming in a very pretty downy-cheeked girl, prepared to commence, when a noise, resembling that produceable by the falling of an eight-and-forty pound shot, echoed through the house. It appeared to descend from the very top of the building down each flight of stairs, rapidly and violently. It passed the door of the room in which they were sitting, and rolled its impetuous course downwards to the basement. As it seemed to leave the parlour the door was forced open, as if by a gust of wind, and stood ajar.

All the children were in a moment on their feet, huddled close to their respective mothers in groups. Mrs. Harding rose and rang the bell to enquire the meaning of the uproar. Her daughter-in-law, pale as ashes, looked at George ; but there was one of the party who moved not—who stirred not : it was the elder Harding, whose eyes first fixed stedfastly on

the half-opened door, followed the course of the wall of the apartment to the fire-place : —there they rested.

When the servants came, they said they had heard the noise, but thought it proceeded from above. Harding looked at his wife ; and then turning to the servant, observed carelessly, that it must have been some noise in the street, and desiring him to withdraw, intreated the bride to pursue her song. She did ; but the children had been too much alarmed to enjoy it, and the noise had in its character something so strange and so unearthly, that even the elders of the party, although bound not to admit any thing like apprehension before their offspring, felt glad when they found themselves at home.

When the guests were gone, and George's wife lighted her candle to retire to rest, her father-in-law kissed her affectionately, and prayed God to bless her. He then took a kind leave of his son, and putting up a fervent prayer for his happiness, pressed him to his heart, and bade him adieu with an earnestness, which, under the common-place circumstance of a temporary separation, was inexplicable to the young man.

When he reached his bed-room he spoke to his wife, and intreated her to prepare her mind for some great calamity.

“What it is to be,” said Harding, “where the blow is to fall I know not; but it is impending over us this night!”

“My life!” exclaimed Mrs. Harding, “what fancy is this?”

“Eliza, love!” answered her husband, in a tone of unspeakable agony, “I have seen her for the third and last time!”

“Who?”

“MARTHA, THE GYPSY.”

“Impossible!” said Mrs. Harding, “you have not left the house to-day!”

“True, my beloved,” replied the husband; “but I have seen her. When that tremendous noise was heard at supper, as the door was supernaturally opened, I saw her. She fixed those dreadful eyes of hers upon me; she proceeded to the fire-place, and stood in the midst of the children, and there she remained till the servant came in.”

“My dearest husband,” said Mrs. Harding, “this is but a disorder of the imagination!”

“Be it what it may,” said he, “I have seen

her. Human or superhuman—natural or supernatural—there she was. I shall not strive to argue upon a point where I am likely to meet with little credit: all I ask is, pray fervently, have faith, and we will hope the evil, whatever it is, may be averted.”

He kissed his wife's cheek tenderly, and after a fitful feverish hour or two fell into a slumber.

From that slumber never woke he more. He was found dead in his bed in the morning!

“Whether the force of imagination, coupled with the unexpected noise, produced such an alarm as to rob him of life, I know not,” said my communicant; “but he was dead.”

This story was told me by my friend Ellis in walking from the city to Harley-street late in the evening; and when we came to this part of the history we were in Bedford-square, at the dark and dreary corner of it where Caroline-street joins it.

“And, there!” said Ellis, pointing downwards, “is the street where it all occurred!”

“Come, come,” said I, “you tell the story well, but I suppose you do not expect it to be received as gospel.”

“Faith,” said he, “I know so much of it, that I was one of the party, and heard the noise.”

“But you did not see the spectre?” cried I.—“No,” said Ellis, “I certainly did not.”

“No,” answered I, “nor any body else, I’ll be sworn.” A quick footstep was just then heard behind us—I turned half round to let the person pass, and saw a woman enveloped in a red cloak, whose sparkling black eyes, shone upon by the dim lustre of a lamp above her head, dazzled me.—I was startled—“Pray remember old MARTHA, THE GYPSY,” said the hag.

It was like a thunder-stroke—I instantly slipped my hand into my pocket, and hastily gave her therefrom a five-shilling piece.

“Thanks, my bonny one,” said the woman, and setting up a shout of contemptuous laughter, she bounded down Caroline-street, into Russell-street, singing, or rather yelling a joyous song.

Ellis did not speak during this scene—he pressed my arm tightly, and we quickened our pace. We said nothing to each other till we

turned into Bedford-street, and the lights and passengers of Tottenham-court-road reassured us.

“What do you think of *that*?” said Ellis to me.

“SEEING IS BELIEVING,” was my reply.

I have never passed that dark corner of Bedford-square in the evening since.

THE END

